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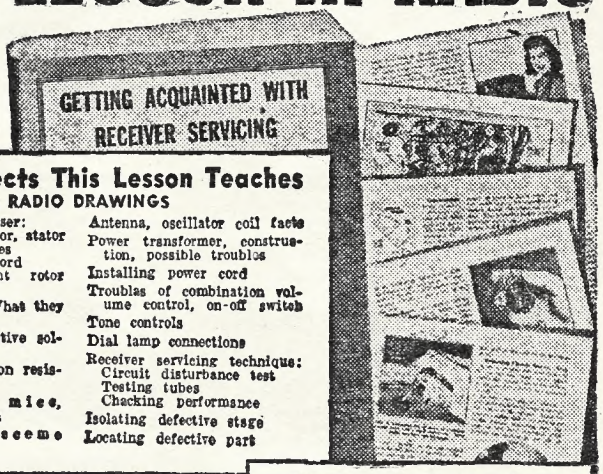

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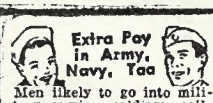

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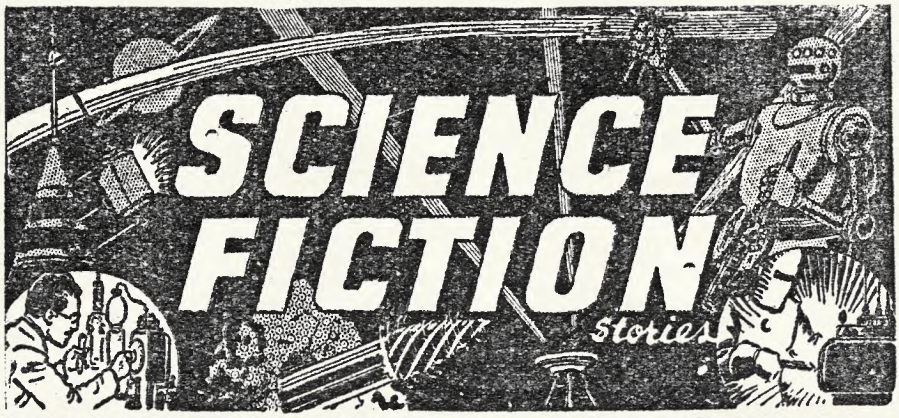

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COMPLETE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL

DOMINION ..... **By Arthur J. Burks** **10**

Trapped in a fantastic jungle city, U. S. Agents Leyson and Horton looked on, helpless, while a conqueror's terrible plans unfolded. And Von Glauber proclaimed: "Behold the New People, created and built to rule and have dominion over all the Earth, for the glory of the Reich!"

THRILLING SHORT STORIES

INFILTRATION ..... **By Clifford D. Simak** **43**

Everyone thought that the "Monsters From Mars" were just clever fakes—until the eerie creatures broke loose!

BLACKOUT ..... **By Damon Knight** **55**

There's no telling what you may see, if Charles Fort's theories are right!

PROBLEM IN ETHICS ..... **By Henry Kuttner** **58**

The whole thought of violence was so foreign to the people of the twenty-first century that it looked as if Mazerth, with its gangster tactics, would crush all competition with ease. But fire can be fought with fire...

THE MAN WHO SAVED NEW YORK ..... **By Ray Cummings** **69**

You won't believe it, but the reason why this war hasn't been won as yet is because a starry-eyed girl named Lisbeth gummed up the works!

THE STELLAR VAMPIRES ..... **By Frank Belknap Long** **79**

Strange was the doom that came to the stranded men on barren Mars—but stranger still was the message they sent out into space: "We walk alone!"

THE MACHINE THAT CHANGED HISTORY ..... **By Robert Bloch** **88**

Adolf Hitler was jubilant; he saw how he could win the world with this time machine; he'd kidnap the great Napoleon, and the two would work out a master strategy. But Bonaparte had other ideas....

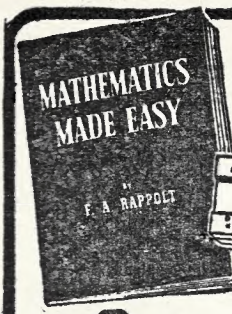
THE ANSWER OUT OF SPACE ..... **By Graph Waldeyer** **97**

John Smith was different—but only the stranger from space knew the full answer!

Cover by Milton Luros, symbolizing the threat of metal men, in Arthur J. Burks' novel, "Dominion." Illustrations by Bok, Fax, Finlay & Shumaker.

ROBERT W. LOWNDES, *Editor*

SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, published Quarterly January, April, July, and October, by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and Executive offices, 60 Hudson Street, New York, New York. For advertising, write to Double Action Group, 60 Hudson Street, New York, New York. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass. Single copies 20c; yearly subscription 80c. Manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes to insure return if not accepted, and while reasonable care will be exercised in handling them, they are submitted at author's risk. Printed in the U. S. A.



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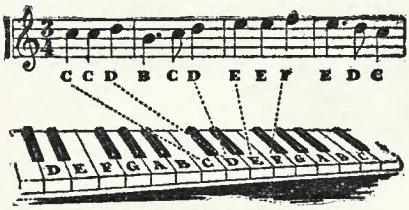

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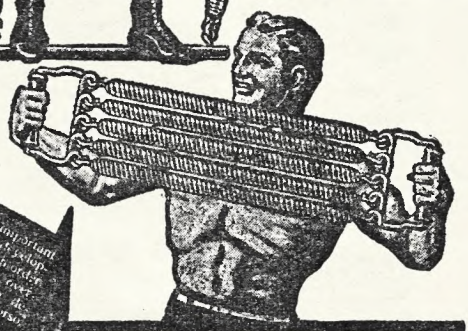

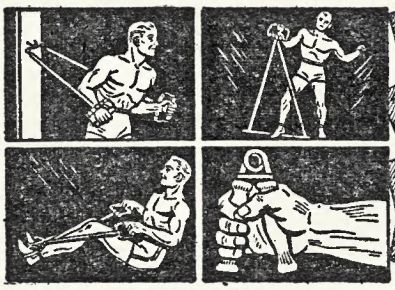

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A Great Science Fiction Novel

By Arthur J. Burks

Deep in the heart of South America's jungles, US Agents Leyson and Horton found the source of the fantastic rumours which had been alarming government officials. And the facts they found were stranger than the wildest stories they had heard, for here were a race of metal men, the New People. And here, behind the scenes, was Von Glauber, sworn follower of the swastika, making a madman's dream come true. For the metal giants had been made to rise and conquer, and have dominion over all the world!

CHAPTER I

Cold Rescue

"HOLY MOTHER!" said Roger Horton, coming to a halt and spreading his legs wide apart to keep from going down. "Take a look at that, will you!"

Jack Leyson looked in his turn, and in spite of the terrific heat of the jungle, went icy cold. Whatever he had expected to find up here, it certainly hadn't been something out of a madman's nightmare. Nightmarish creatures of fang and claw, yes—but nothing like this. He could hear the chattering of Roger Horton's teeth, and it wasn't, this time, because of the fever that had gripped them both for the past three weeks,

"This bullet," came the cold metallic voice of the robot leader, "will take the heel off your right boot." The rifle barked, and Leyson's right boot-heel flew off, almost making him lose his grasp on the ledge. Above, in the cave mouth, Horton crouched, watching grimly.

since they had lost all their duffel —since their carriers had vanished like wraiths, and they had been forced to live off the country.

Both agents stared at the apparition. It looked as though it might have come out of a clothing store window on Fifth Avenue. It was a white man, but one who seemed to wear a mask over his face, so empty of emotion was it. The silent one was dressed in skin-tight clothing, wore queer, square-toed shoes, and a hat that looked like a fireman's helmet with the brim cut off almost all the way around.

He was perhaps six feet tall and his eyes had an eerie shine to them, in the shadows of the teeming forest. He carried no weapons. He merely stood and confronted the two agents. But an aura of menace seemed to flow out of him; Jack Leyson could feel it, like nothing he had ever experienced in all his contact with strange peoples. Roger Horton was plainly frightened. He wouldn't have been, had the stranger been armed and openly antagonistic. It was the man's silence that grated most. Jack Leyson was on the point of asking the stranger what the devil it was all about, when Roger Horton lost control of himself.

Leyson heard the safety catch click on Horton's automatic, but before the fact could register, Horton had leveled his weapon. The forest roared with the sounds of the explosions, three of them in quick succession. Leyson, staring in horror at the pasty-faced apparition, distinctly heard the bullets strike, and the sound of their striking added to the creeping terror in his heart. The man did not go down, did not even seem to feel the bullets. Roger Horton was a dead shot; moreover, Leyson had heard those bullets smash into the stranger.

Now, after a moment's hesitation, during which Leyson had heard the automatic drop from the nerveless hand of Horton, the stranger spoke. There was a peculiar, guttural quality in his voice.

"You are my prisoners, gentlemen. You will offer no resistance. You will follow me!"

What sort of a man was this, anyway? Leyson asked himself. No sooner had he spoken than he turned, presenting his back squarely to the two half-dead U. S. government agents, and started off through the forest.

"He doesn't even disarm us!" said Roger Horton, through chattering teeth. "Jack, what on earth is this, anyway?"

"I don't know, Rog, but we haven't much choice."

"You are quite right, gentlemen," replied the stranger, without turning his head. "You have no choice. Rather, you have the choice you have had all along: finding a place where you can rest, unmolested, or dying in the jungle. You must know that you can't last much longer."

"Wait a minute!" said Leyson hoarsely. "What if we don't choose to be your prisoners?"

"Then you can die. You are hopelessly lost."

"What if we decide to fight it out with you?"

"Hopeless, gentlemen, I assure you. I can kill you both with my hands. Your rifles and automatics are useless against me."

"But who are you? What are you?"

"One of the New People," said the stranger. "Call me Zehn, if you must have a name. And by the way," the stranger had turned when Leyson called to him, "what are your names? You will save time if you tell me."

"My name," said Horton, "is Roger Horton. My partner is John Leyson."

"I thought as much," said Zehn. "Then you are the two gentlemen who have been expected! Follow me. It is not too far."

THE people who have been expected! That glacial chill still possessed the fever-wracked body of Jack Leyson. He could still hear the chattering of Roger Horton's teeth. How could the two of them possibly be expected by anyone? For all the world knew they were merely a couple of explorers, engaged in

that perennial will-o'-the-wisp hunt which had engaged the curiosity of so many explorers: the finding of Colonel Fawcett, or information as to how he had died. That was their publicly avowed purpose.

In reality they had come into the jungles to discover whether certain whispers of secret bases, far inland, were true. Neither had believed it, but they had started to carry out their duty. And had had hard luck from the start.

Darts from the blow-tubes of unseen marauders had killed two of their carriers, three weeks before. Three others had wandered into the jungles, hunting agouti for food; they had never returned. The boats had been lost in the rapids of a nameless river.

Finally, the remaining carriers refused to go further, fearing cannibalistic Indians who were supposed to abound in these parts. The terrified carriers had simply run away.

With only their guns left the two had doggedly set out to go through with their work, planning to live off the country, even though they knew next to nothing about it. And now, this!

"Notice how he spoke English?" asked Roger Horton. "Guttural!"

"And you must have missed him with all three shots!" said Leyson.

"No! No, I didn't. I hit him squarely in the chest. Didn't even stagger him. And his eyes, Jack! Did you notice what they looked like?"

"Yes, like the eyes of a bushmaster, only larger. They glowed, just like the eyes of a cat in the dark."

"But who and what is he? I never heard of any white people in here. He carries no weapons...."

"I think," said Leyson softly, "that the New People, whatever they are, don't need weapons. Rog, we've bumped into something that will make people's hair stand on end."

"Mine already feels like it. What do we do?"

"Take things as they come, until we find out what the answer is—and hope we get it before dark. If we don't, I'm going to be a gibbering idiot before morning. Watch Zehn take the jungles!"

"Zehn?" said Horton. "Zehn? *Zehn* is German for *ten*, Jack. Is that a clue, or a coincidence?"

"Take things as they come, Rog, keep your head and your nerve; we'll see what happens. But save your slugs. The guy must wear armor plate under his clothes. And what strange clothes!"

The stranger ahead, who moved through the liana-strangled aisles of the forest like an Indian, finding a way which no white man—though he himself seemed to be white—could possibly have seen, called back to them.

"Please be good enough not to talk. It *hurts!*"

Now what the devil did the fellow mean by that? Horton started to ask, but Zehn seemed to read his thought, for he added,

"I meant it, definitely! If you do not remain silent I shall be forced to silence you. Your lives are in my hands; you should know it, if you really have the intelligence your government must have thought you had."

"And how," whispered Lyson, "do you like *them* potatoes?"

THE two Americans had been well chosen for their job. Both had been agents for Uncle Sam for five years, entrusted with dangerous and important missions, all over the world. Always together, they seldom disagreed. They might have been blood-brothers as well as brothers in arms. Roger Horton was five feet nine inches tall; he had a waistline when he entered the jungles, a waistline which had vanished so definitely that his clothes hung on him like gunny sacks. Jack Leyson was over six feet in height, muscle and steel and endurance—three words which applied also to Roger Horton.

But fever, bad water, insect bites, sleeplessness, had knocked most of the endurance out of them. Three days ago they had agreed that they couldn't last forty-eight hours longer. That they had so far lasted

seventy-two hours both regarded as a kind of miracle.

"Watch Zehn!" said Leyson, not with words, but by clutching Horton's arm, pinching it, pointing.

Leyson himself could scarcely take his eyes off the mysterious Mr. Zehn. That worthy moved easily through the woods, never for a second being at loss for the proper direction to—wherever he was taking them. He did not use his hands to ward off branches. Smaller ones slapped against his face, to his complete unconcern. Larger ones he avoided by ducking his head, just enough to escape them. He never seemed to look down at his feet, as every traveler in the Amazon watershed must, if he is to escape dying by snake-bite. Insects, both men noticed, disregarded the stranger, though they still attacked Leyson and Horton with ferocity. Both men had long ago given up trying to battle mosquites, chiggers, mosquito-worms. It was a hopeless fight against impossible odds.

"I never before," whispered Horton, "saw a man immune to the critters!"

"Horton!" said the guttural voice. "If you speak again, even to whisper, I shall kill you! Do you understand? I tell you, it *hurts!*"

Horton exchanged glances with Leyson. What did the fellow mean? How could words hurt, especially whispers? Did he mean that he was afraid they were plotting against him, to overpower him? No, they knew he didn't mean that....

The sun was dropping swiftly down the western sky, and the way led sharply upward, as it had led for the last two weeks. There had been times when Horton and Leyson had to scale cliffs. But not now, not with this stranger leading them. There seemed always to be a way up. A ravine here, a crevasse there. The stranger seemed to know every foot of the ground. Whither was he leading them? The jungle itself seemed to be awaiting the answer to that.

Horton suddenly put his hand on Leyson's arm. But Leyson had seen it at the same time. The deadly *sirucucu*, fastest striking, most deadly of jungle reptiles. Raised half its length, it was set to strike at Mr. Zehn. Even as the two agents spotted the ghastly creature—which was all of ten feet long—it struck. They hadn't even a chance to call out a warning.

The bullet head hit. It slanted off. The reptile fell to the ground, threshing about....

Mr. Zehn calmly strode on, ignoring the most lethal reptile in the whole South American jungles! Moreover, Leyson and Horton saw the reptile do something they had never heard of it doing before; it wriggled off into the jungle without renewing the attack. They breathed a sigh of relief, because they would have to pass the spot where it had fallen, to keep on the heels of Mr. Zehn. And from the mouth of Mr. Zehn came a sound that set the hackles of both men raising, a grim, satanic chuckle, like no chuckle they had ever heard before! Mr Zehn marched straight on. A minute passed. Mr. Zehn spoke,

"If that snake had struck one of you gentlemen, you would have another minute of life left, wouldn't you? Oh, don't answer, please. I still am hurt more by talk than by snake venom, far more! If you are expecting me to start looking at the palms of my hands, for blood and pus, the usual result of such a bite, you're doomed to disappointment. I shall suffer no ill effects whatever!"

"The devil!" thought Leyson. "The man simply is not human!"

"Correct, Mr. Leyson," said Mr. Zehn. "I am not human, literally, not human. You should have discovered that, long ago!"

AGAIN the two explorers exchanged glances. As the shadows deepened in the forest a strange, eerie radiance seemed to grow about the body of Mr. Zehn. He appeared to have a sort of inner light of his own. Even this early, before dusk, Leyson had the fearful suspicion that he could follow Mr. Zehn in the dark, by Mr. Zehn's own light. There was sheer horror in the implications

of all this that might have unseated the reason of a man new to the jungles—even Leyson himself, had he encountered him three weeks before. But in three weeks he had seen too much, experienced too much. Nothing now could do aught to his brain.

Horton was reeling all over the place. Leyson, himself almost too weak to stand, to say nothing of walking, tried to keep Horton from going down. The result was that both men went down, and Mr. Zehn stopped, turned back, said,

"Walk back three paces, Leyson. I'll take care of your friend!"

Leyson, puzzled, got to his feet, did as he had been bidden, as there seemed to be no threat in the words of Mr. Zehn. Zehn came back, looked down at Horton, stooped, gathered him swiftly up in his arms, flung him over his shoulders....

A scream of horror burst from the lips of Roger Horton. That scream seemed to startle Zehn for the first time. He jumped, trembled and shook for a moment like a man with the ague. His arm—he used but one, the right, to hold Horton in position—closed so tightly on Horton that Leyson could almost hear his partner's ribs crack.

"Don't hurt him, you!" said Leyson. "Or I'll...."

"You'll do nothing, Leyson," said the stranger, "if you don't want me to squeeze your friend completely in two!"

Leyson started forward. Zehn stopped, started turning. Blast it, did the man have eyes in the back of his head? Leyson stared at Horton, hanging limply there over Zehn's back—Zehn, who still showed no effect whatever from the bite of the *sirucucu*.

Horton had lost consciousness. And several wild thoughts raced through the skull of Jack Leyson. Not once, he remembered now, when limbs had slapped against the face and head of Zehn, had his strange hat been disturbed. Bullets hadn't harmed him. Deadly snake venom had no effect on him. He seemed tireless.

Hell, was Leyson crazy with fever? he asked himself. Why hadn't he realized it before? He certainly should have seen that the man really wore no clothes at all; they were *painted* on! A sort of gruesome joke on the part of someone, plainly.

Moreover, Zehn himself had said ....*"I am literally not human!"* Had referred to himself as "one of the New People!"

MR. ZEHN, Mr. *Ten,* was a mechanical man! A life-size, nightmarish Charlie McCarthy who was as good a woodsman as an Indian!

But how could any mechanical man do what Mr. Zehn had been doing for hours? And whence came the words that had come out of his metallic mouth? And why was this mechanical man, so perfectly made that he had fooled Leyson up until now, and Horton until Horton had felt his hands, been thrown over his shoulder, here in the woods at all?

"Mister Ten!"

How many more of "Mister Ten" were there? Nine, Leyson guessed, obviously. But how many more than ten? Leyson's mind went numb with the shock of the dreadful discovery, all that it did *not* imply. But he stumbled on after Zehn and Horton, until just after dusk and....yes, it was easy to follow the luminous Mr. Zehn....

Right up to the hoary-with-age city of stone, against the sheer wall of a cliff of black basalt. A tumbled mass of a city out of past beyond the records of man. Great blocks of stone, piled one upon another to form temples, and dwellings. Streets. Jumbled terrain below the cliff, made nightmarish by the massive rocks upon the hummocks. A place of shadows, of vague menace, of growing fear.

And of many people like Mr. Zehn, moving hither and yon upon horribly mysterious business. It was little wonder, when he caught sight of this city of the dead, occupied by New People who would never live, that Leyson's body reeled, as his mind had all but been reeling

since he had discovered some of the impossible truth about Mr. Zehn.

Mr. Zehn, stepping out of the jungles, set Horton upon his feet. He held him up with his left hand, grasped his chin with his right, shook it roughly from side to side. Horton snapped out of it, finally, opened his eyes to look into those of Mr. Zehn. His mouth opened on a shriek of terror.

"No, please, Horton," said Mr. Zehn. "I've already told you, it *hurts!* You gentlemen will take up your abode in whatever building suits you. I shall send food to you shortly. Food! How poorly organized, those who have need of it!"

CHAPTER II

Deepening Mystery

"IT'S LIKE being on another planet," said Roger Horton, as the two men, waiting for something to eat, stood in the door of the stone building they had chosen for the time being. "An ancient city, going back forever, as far as we know...."

"Inhabited by people so modern," said Leyson grimly, "that they're decades ahead of their time."

"With armies mechanized," said Roger Horton, "I'm not so sure. Jack, just what do you think we're in for?"

"Certainly nothing our superiors in Washington could have guessed," said Jack grimly. "Just have a look out there, will you!"

Now that the sun had set, a pale yellowish moon rode high over a landscape that may well, as Horton had said, have been on another planet. A city of jumbled rocks buildings, all that remained of a forgotten civilization. The foothills of a continent's backbone, where mountains and jungles embraced; where one could look away to the sky and see the mountains still climbing, could look away below to a vast forest that was black by night and green by day. But that was not all that thrilled the two agents who had come into this land to make it safe for its own people, free from the slavery which had been visited upon most of Europe.

It was the figures which moved through the city. Luminous, vaguely human figures. Figures which seemed to reflect the lemonish light of the moon itself, except for their eyes. The eyes of all of them were crimson....

"Like dimmers on ambulances," said Leyson huskily. "And they spray red light!"

"And what are they doing?" said Horton. "They seem to go into the jungles and come out again, aimlessly. There seems to be no reason for them."

"They're mechanical men, Rog," said Leyson, "and somewhere there must be real men, of strange mental attainments, who control them. Those red eyes are the lenses of cameras. By some means of remote control, the human masters of these Mister Zehns can see with the ruby eyes of their metal slaves; and by exercise of the same control can cause those monsters to walk as easily and surely around obstacles as they can themselves! Remember how Mr. Zehn walked? He threaded his way through the jungles like an Indian. They are wireless men, too, Rog. Their masters see through their eyes; talk through their metal mouths. When Mr. Zehn talked to us, the words we heard were actually those of his pilot for the moment, who, many miles away, could see us through Zehn's eyes, hear what we said, and talk to us—with perfect safety for himself!"

"And when Zehn said that speech hurt him...."

"Something about our vocal vibration, certainly," said Leyson. "God, Rog, just look at that, out there!"

Black monoliths of stone, the hidden city. With mechanical men, like overgrown fireflies, threading their ways in and out through the prehistoric streets, into the forest and out again, on missions the two flesh and blood men could not even guess at. And the picture was always changing because the Zehns were on

the move. Now one portion of the city would be strangely lighted, now dreadfully dark. The robots were their own lanterns.

"They're making photographic maps of the area, Rog," said Leyson.

"They? Who?"

"Whoever rules the mechanical men!"

"And what do you suppose they're going to do with us?"

"Something, certainly, or they wouldn't have kept us alive. And right at this moment nobody is watching us, or listening to us, so it's a time for making plans. We've got to find the central control plan of this unbelievable place!"

"Shhhh!" said Roger Horton. "Someone's coming!" Horton chuckled when he had spoken. An odd way to speak of mechanical men. And yet, in all things save souls and brains, the mechanical men were like other men, and far more efficient. They did not need food, rest, water, or protection against the dangers of the jungles. They had no slightest conception of fear. Perfect soldiers of the unknown forests!

MR. ZEHN came through the door, his arms filled with canned goods.

Both men stared at him. Their faces were eerie in the light that came in with Mr. Zehn. The pale lemonish glow of him filled the room in which the two agents were resting.

"Well, Zehn," said Leyson, "I thought you were never going to keep your promise about food! We're starving. And if we had some medicine....you see, we're both half nuts, with fever."

"I am not Zehn," said the slow, measured voice of the newcomer, a voice that was plainly different from that of Zehn. "I am *Einundswanzig!* Here is food. There is no need of medicines. I shall treat you! I might even call myself *Doctor* Einundswanzig."

"No doubt now, I guess," muttered Horton. "German as sauerkraut. Twenty One! That's this fellow's name. Look at the canned stuff, Jack! The paper wrapping's all removed!"

"Maybe it's our own food, that we had to leave behind," said Leyson. "Nothing would surprise me. Got matches, Doc? And a can-opener? And we could do with some fresh meat."

"Soup, for tonight," said the newcomer, "if I am to treat you both. There will be bedclothing presently, and a fire built on the ancient stone hearth yonder. Meantime, Mr. Horton, give me your hands."

Horton gasped, looked a question at Leyson, who shrugged. Horton faced the "Doctor," held out both hands. The mechanical hands of the Doctor reached forth, grasped the hands of Horton.

"Do not be frightened," said the Doctor. "The pain will be short and sharp."

No sooner had he spoken than Horton became mute, writhing in agony, while the doctor talked calmly with Leyson.

"Nothing is more efficacious against fever than greater heat. We use one heat to burn out another. In a matter of moments, your friend will be free of the fever. Weak, however. This electrolytic treatment will destroy the malaria germs in his system."

The whole room seemed to be filled with electricity. For just a moment Leyson wondered if Horton were being electrocuted. But he found himself with a strange faith in this Doctor. A faith at great variance with his certain knowledge that there was no mercy, no sympathy, no humanity in the thing. It was the voice that soothed him.

Now, suddenly, Horton was released. His body was bathed in sweat. Wonderingly, panting, he turned to look at Leyson. His eyes were clear for the first time in weeks.

"I'm weak as a kitten, Jack," he said, "but I haven't felt better in ages."

Leyson, without a word, stepped into the strange embrace of Doctor Einundswanzig. The room was blotted out as the electricity hit

him. He felt himself rising on his toes. He felt himself held in a grip stronger than any he had ever experienced in his life before. He felt the surge and flow of force through him. He felt his breathing cut off. He felt he could stand it no longer. It was beyond endurance; but even as the thought flashed through his mind, he was released, and knew in the instant that he was finished with malaria. The "Doctor" stood for a moment, looking from one to the other.

"You may each drink two cans of hot soup," he said. "No more, or you will be nauseated. This treatment is severe."

Now two more "men" came into the place, bearing blankets, plenty of them. They scarcely looked at Horton and Leyson, and the two agents scarcely noticed the newcomers. Their beds were swiftly made up for them. Then one of the "men" brought in wood and twigs, and a fire was soon going, a pot placed on the fire, four cans of soup set to bubbling. Then the two men left, and Leyson suddenly exclaimed,

"They didn't say a word! I just remember. They weren't luminous! Didn't have ruby eyes! They wore colored goggles, that's all! Rog, those last two were *men!*"

LEYSON raced to the door, looked out. An eerie chuckle came from the "Doctor," who said,

"They have no light, either. They were lost to your sight when they stepped outside. No use trying to follow them. Yes, they were men. Their visit was timed exactly, to the moment when you would be more concerned with yourselves and me, than with anything else. We are a very efficient people!"

"Why," said Leyson," does our speech hurt Mr. Zehn, and not hurt you at all?"

The "Doctor" chuckled again, said,

"My vibration is different from its! No two of us have the same vibration. It just happened that the combination of your two voices hurt Zehn. It might never happen again, to any of us."

"Talking to you," said Leyson, peering into the pot, sniffing the soup, "is like talking over the telephone. I wish you'd tell me to whom we're indebted for this treatment, and when we can say thanks, face to face!"

Again the "Doctor" chuckled.

"The time will come when you, and the world, will see much more of me than is bargained for! That applies particularly to you two gentlemen. You will return to that world, eventually, to prepare it for our coming. It is well that our enemies be warned, and properly frightened!"

Leyson and Horton looked at each other. Leyson shivered, gathering a frightful import from the words of the "Doctor," which he knew came to him from some distant place—from some place which might be ten feet away, ten miles, or a hundred miles, or even further. He could not see that place. All the clue he had was a voice. He and Horton were at a great disadvantage. They could be watched and listened to, so long as one of the mechanical men was in sight of them.

The bubbling of the soup answered a current, and drastic need. They dipped it up in the cans which had originally held it, juggled the hot containers in their torn and scratched fingers, drank down the soup. The Doctor watched them. His yellow glow continued to fill the place which was, in effect, their prison. Now and again he looked about the room, spraying it with light.

The two men finished their soup. Leyson spread the fire, so that the smoke would do them no harm, spoke to Horton.

"Let's get some sleep. I feel I could sleep for a week."

"You will sleep ten hours, and find it sufficient," said the Doctor. "There is no more time than that. Time is valuable to us. Good night, gentlemen."

Leyson and Horton stripped down to their underwear after the mechanical doctor had gone, and crawled beneath the blankets. Their first beds in weeks, and both men

felt that they were safe, at least from the usual hazards of the jungles. In an instant Horton was snoring, but Leyson did not immediately drop off. As the leader of this strange expedition, he could not pamper himself to that extent, just yet. He must try to figure out answers. What were the mechanical men being used for? There was no escape from them, for they could travel through the jungles without food, water or rest. Were they being used to subjugate the natives? There were Indians of many tribes, scattered through these jungles. There were bush negroes. That mechanical "Doctor"....

LEYSON sat bolt upright. "That's *one* of the things," he told himself, almost aloud. "Those mechanical men....why, Indians and bush negroes would fall down and worship them, when their arrows and darts had no effect on them. And the masters of the mechanical men certainly have electrolytic cures for everything that makes Indians and Negroes sick. A half dozen Doctor Einundswanzigs, working among the natives, could weld them together, happy because healthy, into a formidable group of fighters! Then, after curing them of their hills, those doctors could induce them to listen to their human masters. Those human masters could teach them how to use rifles, pistols, machine-guns ..."

Leyson's thoughts were interrupted at this point by the strangest apparition of all. A white, ghostly creature came, in utter silence, through the door. It poised, listening, and Leyson knew that he was looking at a young woman. White, too. He guessed that her hair was golden, that she was around twenty years of age. Her clothing looked to be scanty. He could make out bare legs, and he thought her feet were bare, too, though he could not be sure. And he guessed that there was nothing mechanical about her.

"Hello, sister," he said softly. "What's up?"

A gasp of terror burst from the girl. He did not see her turn and run, so swiftly did it happen. One moment she was poised, there in the darkness, and the next moment she was gone—and a strange desolation possessed Jack Leyson. He was on his feet, standing in the door, in a second, but in no direction could he see her. Only the lost city was still alive, if being a-crawl with mechanical men could be said to be alive. No sight of the girl, anywhere. What was she? Friend or enemy? If enemy, why had she been sent? To slay? But the enemy had had plenty of chances to slay, and had not taken them; had even cured the two men of malaria. What, then?

No use pursuing her. Leyson went back to his bed. And sleep appeared to have fled from him. He lay there, looking at the door, a dim rectangle of light. Now and again that rectangle of light brightened, became yellowish, and he could hear the measured footfalls of one of the mechanical men, passing the place. They were being watched, no doubt about that. Had that been the reason why the girl had run?

No telling. She was simply one of the mysteries of the place.

And then, when he had given up, and sleep seemed close, there she was again, standing in the door, looking at him as though she could see him in the dark. And her forefinger was plainly against her lips, for silence. Leyson's heart hammered with excitement. She would certainly not be so secretive if she were one of their captors.

Leyson sat up. The girl, glancing both ways, outside the door, came to Leyson, hesitantly, yet proudly. She held out her hand in the dark, as though groping. Leyson touched it, to let her know that he knew she was there. She dropped to her knees near him, but with her head turned aside in an attitude of listening. She began to speak, in a language that Leyson could not understand, yet which had a distinct sound of familiarity about it. He realized then that it was English, but a strange kind of English—as though the girl had not used the tongue all her life.

"You are not friend of New People?" Leyson managed to deduce from her gibberish.

"No. They are enemies of my country and my people," said Leyson. "Who are you? Where do you come from?"

"Enemies of my people, too," said the girl, painstakingly following the order of his own words. "I am Shama. I come from the forest, where my people live.

"But you are white. The forest people are red, or black."

"No matter, my people. No chance to explain now. But you must get away. Must destroy these New People. They destroy my people, your people, all people. They destroy me if I am caught here—or anywhere, because I am against them."

IT took a long time for him to piece her words together, make sense of them, interpret them for himself. The girl, Shama, was frightened, but she was brave, too. She was as much a mystery to him as was the city of the dead, and the New People, and their masters.

"What is the name of this place, Shama?" he asked.

"Place of the gods," said Shama. "Where all gold is. And stones that shine. And evil things are imprisoned."

"Do you know where the people are, like you and me, who are masters of the New People?"

"No, but I can find them. I know the jungle. I am almost born in it."

"It is very dangerous. I should go with you. Hey, wait!"

But she had risen as he talked, and was gone, like a shadow, leaving behind her the wholesome odor of jungle flowers, of health, and courage. Scarcely had she vanished than a mechanical man came to the door, entered, looked all about. Leyson snored comfortably. The crimson rays from the robot's eyes rested for a full minute on the face of Leyson. Muttering, mumbling, Leyson brushed his hand over his face, swore softly. The robot went out. Leyson waited for Shama to return.

She did not come back. He would never sleep, he decided, until he knew more about her. But he was quite mistaken. For from pretending to sleep, he fell into a deep sleep, which lasted until dawn came through the door, and with it two mechanical men with fresh meat for breakfast.

The two agents, feeling ravenously hungry, stared at the two who brought the food. But they had to accept disappointment. Both newcomers were mechanical men. Just once had their masters sent living men to them, perhaps because they had not entirely trusted what they had seen through the eyes of their robots, heard through their metal ears. Now there would be only the robots.

And, perhaps, Shama.

Might as well start the ball rolling. Lyson said, to whichever one of the robots cared to answer.

"We're okay now. How soon can we get out of this place?"

"You are not leaving," said one of them.

"We are, as soon as we can get started."

"Try to escape," said one of the robots, "and you will be killed out of hand. We have a use for you, as we have a use for others. Try to thwart us and die, as they will die in the same case! And don't become too curious about your surroundings. Men sometimes discover too much! To know too much will mean death, as certainly as an attempt to escape will mean death!"

Grimly Leyson stooped, caught up a rock the size of a baseball. With all his might he hurled it straight at the head of the nearest robot. The robot dodged. The rock crashed against the wall beyond. The robot chuckled, as though immensely amused! The two robots then went out and away, and Horton and Leyson, very silently, went about preparing their breakfast.

"We're certainly caught in a nice trap," said Leyson, when they had eaten their fill, and were sitting on their blankets to wait for whatever might come next.

"Yeah," said Horton.

"And I don't intend to sit and take it, see? I'm going out and have a look around. I want to know what goes on!"

"I've no yen to fight tanks with my bare hands," said Horton, "but if you go, what choice have I?"

They strolled out into the now-blazing sun, to find the dead city a-crawl with robots. But the instant they stepped out, every robot in sight went motionless. Some of them stood, like statues. Some leaned against rocks. Some even sat. But not one of them moved. The sudden silence was more horrible than the nightmares of night.

"Mechanical men," said Leyson, "don't have corpses!"

CHAPTER III

Cats and Mice

JACK LEYSON had had enough of the mystery. He felt well enough to make a break for it, or to begin trying to find out things. Besides, somewhere, there was Shama; he had felt in her voice an appeal for help, for herself and for her people.

This new trick, of all the robots going motionless, was irritating beyond words.

There must be something I can discover about them, if they keep in motion, Leyson thought. By watching them, I could estimate the direction, even the distance, to the communication center.

Leyson looked at Horton, not daring to say anything, knowing that although the robots were inert, every robot eye connected with the communication center he could visualize; in that communication center someone human could see whatever the robot could see, hear whatever anyone said within earshot of any robot. And he had a sneaking suspicion that the robots were such sensitive receiving sets that they could also pick up their thoughts. Mr. Zehn had all but proved this very thing, yesterday.

Horton shrugged, but Leyson knew that whatever he did, Horton would second to the best of his ability. He always did. And both men felt refreshed and strong. They had weapons, though. That would be a serious handicap if they successfully eluded the machine-men.

They wandered easily through the ancient city, while the robots maintained silence and immobility—a thing that gradually strained the two men's nerves until they seemed to twang like bowstrings.

To all appearances, there wasn't a chance of escape. And Leyson had no wish to become a guinea pig for the potential enemies of his country. That, it seemed to him, was what they were being slated for.

Passing through the principal section of the dead city, they gradually approached the cliff behind it—a cliff honeycombed with cave mouths; at one time in the world's history, perhaps, it had been the homes of ancestors of the people who had built this city.

As Leyson moved toward the cliff, with Horton close on his heels, he fully expected the robots to start moving at any moment. That any one of them could tear him limb from limb, he knew very well. They were the most devilish potential instruments of destruction he had ever encountered. In the hands of enemies of society they could work such havoc as the world had never seen before. And they already held complete dominion, he was sure, over the section of the jungle they had been set to roam. How many of them were they? That each was as strong as many men he already knew. If there were large numbers of them...

On a sudden hunch he paused in front of one of the robots which leaned against a rock wall.

"Wie heist du?" he demanded. "How are you called?"

"My name is *Sechs hundert sieben zehn,"* said the robot, calmly.

Six hundred and seventeen! How many more were there than six hundred and seventeen, when a dozen could have held this part of the Amazon Valley in their metal hands? No way of telling. He could have

asked, and he probably would have been told. But he dreaded to know. It was enough to realize that one of the most powerful military machines the Western Hemisphere could ever know, had already been forged here in the lost land of jungles and mountains.

The two men walked calmly toward the almost sheer rise of the cliff, while Leyson's eyes played over it, studying it for hand-and-foot-holds.

"All right, pal," he said softly to Horton, "here we go!"

HE suddenly broke into a run. Instantly the robots nearest exploded into action. They began closing in on the two Americans. But Leyson, with Horton on his heels, had reached the cliff and started climbing. Could the robots climb? He had a fearful suspicion that they could do a better job of it than any man, but to be used any further in this cat and mouse game....well, he simply couldn't do it.

A dozen robots were against the face of the cliff, reaching up for Leyson and Horton, but not quite making it.

"Make for the first cave mouth, Rog," said Leyson. "We'll get a breathing space there while we decide what to do next. Right now it looks as if we'd jumped from the frying pan into the fire."

"But anyway," panted Horton, "we've jumped. We've made a start."

From far below them, back in the heart of the city, came a hail.

"Stop, Leyson! Come back, or I'll put a bullet in you!"

Leyson and Horton, spreadeagled there on the black face of the cliff, paused to look back. Standing in front of the building in which they had spent the night, was one of the robots, with a rifle in his hands—one of *their* rifles. Horton laughed. There was hysteria in his laughter.

"Climb, Rog, as you value your life!" gasped Leyson.

"Do you think a robot can fire a rifle?" said Horton.

"As accurately as if the rifle were in a vise, Rog," said Leyson. "If we don't reach cover, we're dead ducks. I doubt if he'll drill us with the first shot, though. They want us kept alive—the masters of the metal men, I mean."

He had scarcely finished when the rifle spoke. But even before it spoke a leaden pellet smashed against the rocks near Leyson's right hand. He stared for an instant at the spot, as the hot smell of emery powder burned his nostrils; that smell which always comes when a bullet hits rock. The bullet had struck the rock between his thumb and forefinger—and that it was accidental he knew to be impossible. No vise could have held as steadily, at that distance. Nor could the human eye have gauged such a shot, uphill, making the proper allowance for mirage and the other elements which went into marksmanship.

"He could shoot the lobes off our ears," said Leyson. "Scram as you never scrammed before!"

"The next one," came the bellowed voice of the robot, "will take off the left heel of your boot!"

Still Leyson did not pause. Again the rifle spoke. Leyson's left foot jumped, almost causing him to lose his grip on the face of the cliff. Wildly he looked down. The ground was now two hundred feet below, at least. A fall would mean certain death.

But his hands were both over the edge of a cave-mouth, and he was pulling himself up. He got inside, grabbed Horton by the wrists, yanked him in.

Both men flung themselves flat as the rifle barked again. The bullet went through the space where Horton's body had been, and Leyson knew something else: he was regarded as the more important of the two men, and the enemy would destroy Horton in order to compel Leyson to obey them.

But they were now out of range, and back of them were the black depths of the cave.

They began to crawfish backward. Bullets probed for them. They were expected, apparently, to rise into the

line of fire, but Leyson had no intention of doing anything of the sort.

Finally, when sure that the angle was too great for them to be in danger, Leyson and Horton rose to their feet, turned into the depths of the cave, Leyson handicapped by his heelless left boot. It was utterly dark. No robot was in here; had there been, the men would have seen the glow of the metal bodies, or of the ruby eyes.

"WE'LL look for some way into the cave next above this," said Leyson. "We're free for the moment, though I'm still not satisfied that the robots can't climb. They'll be after us in a minute, wait and see."

"Let's see," said Horton, "but don't let's wait!"

Leyson led the way, feeling his way with his feet, not knowing when they might step into an abyss. It was like swimming in black velvet. They could see nothing, and when they paused they could hear nothing except the hammering of their own hearts.

Not so much as a glow of light. And Leyson was acutely conscious of the fact that anyone beyond them could see their outlines against the light of the cave mouth. They stumbled and staggered over the ruins of what they knew to be ancient dwellings. They fell and barked their knees and their shins. But they went on.

And finally a voice said,

"Stop, please; you're safe for a moment!"

"A dame!" said Horton, explosively. "A dame, but I can't see her."

"Shama!" said Leyson.

"Yes." Then a soft hand was in Leyson's hand, and Horton gasped, so Leyson knew that Shama had also taken the hand of his partner.

"Come with me. You should not have done this, but I expected you would. There is a way out, to the jungle, built by the ancients, in case they were besieged and cut from food and water. I am the only one who knows of it."

"It sounds like English," said Horton, "but just what is it? What did she say?"

"In brief, we're jumping from the fire back into the frying pan," said Leyson, "or else we're jumping into a bigger fire. This is Shama. She made contact with me last night, while you were snoring. That's about all I know about her, except that she's white, and terribly afraid of what our metallic friends are doing to her people. Let's follow her lead; we can't be any worse off than we are, and we'll be giving our pals something to think about."

The girl turned to the right, a bit further on, and a blast of cold air bathed their faces. The way led sharply downward. The girl moved without hesitation, as if she could see in the dark, or as if she had traveled this way so many times she did not need to see.

"Her hand feels nice," said Horton. "Is she pretty?"

"If she is," said Leyson, "it's no concern of yours. I saw her first."

Shama laughed. Leyson swore softly.

"Women are all the same, wherever you find them," he said.

"For which a fugitive gives thanks!" said Horton. "Dames are realistic. This one may be bent on saving her people, but if at the same time she can save a man she thinks she likes, who's to blame her?"

"Your friend talks too much," said Shama. "He should save his breath for what we have to do."

"I UNDERSTOOD every word of *that!*" said Horton. "Listen!"

All three halted at Horton's suggestion. Behind them in the eerie darkness could be heard the sounds of hurried footfalls. The robots had climbed up the face of the cliff, were in swift pursuit. Looking back they could see the lemonish glow of them.

"Hurry! Hurry!" said Shama. "My people will protect me, fearful as they are of these metal gods, and I don't think...."

She broke off shortly there,

started running, dragging at the two men.

"Hurry," she repeated. "If you fall you can always get up again. The way is smooth."

"And our enemies," Leyson finished what she had been saying, "will go easy with your people because they need them!"

"I hope so!" said Shama, fervently as though she prayed.

The sloping tunnel curved sharply to the right, began to rise. And the air was no longer cold, but steamy hot, as from the jungles—and Leyson knew that they had passed a tunnel which gave forth the cold air, a tunnel that must have led to cold water somewhere.

"Faster!" said Shama. "Faster, oh, faster! We've got to get among my people before the metal gods can see me. So far I am not known to them!"

Leyson's heart sank. If the enemy did not know of Shama, what would they do when they found out? He could imagine what horror it might well be for her, if she fell into their hands. Then the enemy could use not only the superstitious reverence of her people for the robots, but their reverences for the white girl herself. And men in uniform were not usually very considerate of young beautiful women. Not from all Leyson had heard.

They turned to the left, and ahead of them was a glare of light which caused Leyson to cry out and halt. But the girl urged him on. It was only the blistering sunlight on a clearing in the jungle, looking unusually bright because they had been so long in Stygian darkness.

They broke forth into that clearing, and Shama stepped out faster, while Leyson and Horton really saw her for the first time. Yes, her hair was long, and like spun gold against the sun. Her legs were slim, and moved with the grace and speed of a ballet dancer. She was lovely. Leyson's heart jumped into his throat as he considered her.

"Faster!" said Shama. "Faster! We've got to get into the shadows before the metal gods see Shama!"

"Then you haven't a minute left," said Leyson. "I can hear them coming up to the cave mouth."

Shama cried out, pulled free of the two men.

"Follow me, straight ahead. You'll meet some of my people. They will not harm you! Pay them no attention!"

The girl was gone, like a wraith, swift as the wind. Leyson and Horton could not keep up with her. She had vanished into the shadows of the surrounding jungle. Leyson and Horton had no time to mark the place, to note what the entrance was like. But it was untrodden, and Leyson guessed that it was tabu to the natives, though few of them could know why. A tabu that had been handed down the generations, perhaps.

Leyson and Horton crashed into the jungles, to find them alive with moving figures. Indians! More Indians than either of them had ever seen. Small men, some of them with pot-bellies, some of them with bones through their ears and their noses. All with black hair, no clothing. All with blowguns and darts, or bows and arrows. And on their faces such expressions of fear as Leyson could scarcely comprehend.

None of the Indians looked at Leyson and Horton. They were looking back the way the two white men had come. Leyson and Horton bulled right through the sour-smelling bodies of the redmen. Men knocked aside seemed not even to feel the blows. At any other time the Indians would not only have been invisible, but would have shot the two white men for such indignities.

"Imagine," said Leyson, "what we could do with these people if *we* controlled the robots."

"Yeah," said Horton.

"And you can guess," went on Leyson, "what those who do control them are planning to do with the natives. Look at those darts and arrows. Their tips are black as tar. That means every last one of them has been dipped in those poison pots they carry at their breechclouts! So take it easy, pal; in rough-housing these

gents, don't scratch yourself on one of those arrows or darts, or you'll never again have to worry about falling into the hands of our metal men!"

THEY had rushed through the thickest part of the gathering Indians. Shama, racing into the forest, had called out repeatedly,

"Tacaditi! Tacaditi!"

Now Leyson remembered.

"She was probably telling them that the metal gods were coming, and that you and I didn't count, were to be permitted through. Otherwise..."

But he didn't explain what he meant by otherwise. He didn't need to. Horton knew.

"Far enough for the moment," said Leyson. "Pick yourself a tree and let's see what goes on!"

Suiting action to words, Leyson jumped behind a large tree, Horton right with him. One of them looked out to the right, the other to the left —to see a most amazing thing. At the very edge of the jungles a half dozen robots had come to a full stop. And all around them, their faces abjectly in the leaves and mold, were the Indians who had not, apparently, even seen Leyson and Horton. Leyson watched it for a moment. The heads of the robots were turning, and he knew that both Horton and himself were sure to be spotted, if they had not already been discovered. Knew that, far away, or close—just how far or how close he must find out before the matter was ended—a human enemy was watching them both, *six* human enemies, planning dire things to do to them when they were caught again. Those enemies would also wonder mightily at the fact that the Indians had let the two white men through.

"Rule the robots," said Leyson, "and rule the jungles! Come on, they won't trample those Indians. Gods don't work like that. Let's keep going. I've a feeling now that we may out-smart these guttural voiced Johnnies, after all!"

They crashed on through the jungle, knowing themselves safe from pursuit for the time being. They found Shama waiting for them. And tears were streaming down her cheeks. Horton clucked his sympathy. It was all Leyson could do to keep his own arms from going around her shaking shoulders.

"You see?" she said. "You see what they do to my people? And there is nothing I can do. They only tolerate me now. But they believe the metal ones are stronger."

"Why?" said Leyson.

"Because their eyes are red. Because darts do not hurt them. Because they travel without fear in the dark!"

"Listen," said Horton. "Leave it to Jack and me! We'll do something about it, you can be sure of that. Why? Well, because my pal has taken a shine to you, even if he never gets up nerve enough to say so."

"Taken a shine? He does not shine! What do you mean?"

"Unless he is an awful fool," said Horton, grinning, "he won't wait more than twenty-four hours more before telling you!"

She must have guessed, however, from the expression on Leyson's face. And it didn't make her angry. Rather, she smiled, and rubbed away her tears with the back of her hand, like a child.

"Take me to wherever we can make medicine, Shama," said Leyson. "We've got to figure how to turn the tables on the masters of the metal men!"

CHAPTER IV

Whispers in the Dark

SHAMA led the two men to her own dwelling place, one obviously built by white men. There were chairs, divans, a table—every sort of convenience for a family, say, of three people. Leyson's curiosity was aroused.

Shama, guessing, told him swiftly. Both men were becoming more accustomed to her English, which must have been affected by the Indian tongue she was used to speaking.

"My father and mother came in here when I was very young," she said. "I never knew why. But father seemed afraid of something, and so did mother. Father had many books with him. I have tried to learn from them. I spoke English before they....before they....well, went away. Mother went first. A strange sickness. Father could not live without her. I was about seven years old. I was left alone with the Indians...."

Leyson held his breath as he listened. Horror gripped him, too, as he thought what it must have been like for this young girl, alone for the last dozen years or more, among cannibalistic Indians.

"My golden hair saved me," she went on. "There is a story about a woman with white skin, and golden hair....but I'll tell you about that later...."

"The Sirens story!" said Leyson. "Must have seeped into the jungles from somewhere, and got all twisted."

"Yes," said Shama. "It's the story of the sirens."

"Your name, though. It isn't English."

"The Indians have called me Shama since I was little. My parents did, too, to please the people we lived with. But...."

"But that isn't getting us anywhere now. Shama, do you understand the metal men? What makes them walk, and talk, and nothing hurt them?"

There was instant terror in her eyes, and Leyson realized that Shama herself was inclined to credit them with being supernatural. His sympathy for her grew. He could imagine with difficulty how she had been able to carry on, herself believing, as did the Indians, that the robots were from another world, maybe even from the sky....

"There was a great sound, a great roaring in the night," she said. "My people heard it and were terribly afraid. But I have never been afraid of the night. I know the smell of the jaguar, and I can see the eyes of serpents in the dark. I can climb trees faster than the natives. So I went out when the sound was loudest. I saw two great eyes, high above the cliff where the caves are. They were circling, and great white winged things were dropping from some black bulk between the eyes..."

"Running lights of a plane!" said Leyson. "Men dropping by parachutes."

"Also robots," said Horton.

"That was a year ago," said Shama. "Since then the roaring has come often, always at night, and more creatures have dropped. They come out of the west, over the mountains. And there is much thunder in the deep valley..."

"Deep valley?"

"Yes, where the ancestors of my people once dug for yellow metal, gold. Oh, Zhack, we have made things very difficult. You see, for all the years I can remember, my people have known of the exit from the caves, but they have never dared enter. Tabus. But I entered the caves when I was a mere child, and because the gods did not injure me, the Indians regarded me as an immortal. Now, since they have seen the metal men come out of the same cave, and saw me racing to escape them, they will be more nearly convinced than ever, that the metal gods are stronger that I am."

"WHICH simply adds to the difficulty of our job, Shama," said Leyson, taking her hand and stroking it, much to her delight. "Now, then, Shama, are you afraid to take Horton and me to this deep valley you mention? Can you get us there without our being observed?"

"Of course. That's where the shining ones work."

"Shining ones?"

"Other metal men, I think. Not like those you have seen. These are the workers. They mine for gold and precious stones."

"Using robots in mines!" said Horton. "That's really something. They never get tired."

"Can you take us there, Shama?"

said Leyson softly. "Gold is what most men consider the most precious thing, for which they take the most chances. Some of the people we wish to contact will be there, watching the work, or will certainly come there, if we wait long enough. Can we get there at night, unobserved by the metal men?"

"I can take you there," said Shama simply. "But it is terribly dangerous."

"Everything here is dangerous," said Leyson. "But it's imperative that Horton and I make contact with the human beings back of all this. Now, Shama, I'll try to explain the metal men."

He spoke swiftly, and she tried her best to understand, though electricity, remote radio control, remote camera-control work, and the like, were beyond her. Even when he had finished she was inclined to regard the metal men as something more than human—which may not have been far wrong.

"We've got to reach their communication center," said Leyson. "And we've got to get control of it, somehow. And Rog, there's bound to be explosives in this deep valley, wouldn't you think? How do they blast out the rocks?"

"There is much roaring, sudden and air-shaking, in deep valley," said Shama simply, "if that means anything to you."

"Let's have something to eat," said Leyson, "and then rest until dark. And look—I can use bow and arrows, and so can Horton. Can you get two bows for us, and a flock of arrows?"

"Poisoned?" she asked brightly.

Leyson shuddered. "I wouldn't use poison on rattlesnakes," he said. "Just plain, ordinary arrows."

"They'd use poison on us," said Horton, grumbling.

"Maybe, but so far they haven't. Besides, maybe we'll get some of their own weapons. We'll just hang onto the bows and arrows until we get a break."

DEEP darkness had settled over the jungles when Shama, who had watched silently over the two sleeping men, wakened Leyson and Horton, let them know it was time to go. Her eyes were bright with hope. Leyson could not help himself. He took her in his arms, held her tightly against him. He felt her heart beating against him, like that of a frightened bird. He let her go, looked down into her face. If he expected her to be startled, or resentful, he was mistaken.

"When father took mother in his arms like that," she said softly, "he always pressed his lips against hers, like this!"

She stood on tiptoe, caught his head between her soft warm palms, pulled his head down and kissed him. Horton chuckled.

"Isn't it almost time to tell her what a man feels like when he takes a shine to a woman?"

"I understand why they did it," said Shama. "It's very nice!"

Whether she understood all the implications of the kiss, was doubtful, but Horton had his suspicions, inasmuch as she didn't offer to kiss *him*.

"My people will be in their shacks, through the jungles," said Shama. "They fear many devils, and now there are the metal gods. They will not even know I am out of my house. They will see the light go out, and think I sleep."

"What will they think about two men in your house?"

"Shama," said Shama, "can do whatever she wishes, as far as they are concerned. She can not be wrong."

Shama, a few minutes after she had snuffed out the pitch flambeaus which lighted her house, listened first for sounds from the jungles which neither Leyson nor Horton could hear. Then she signaled that all was clear, and led the way into the night.

"Keep right behind me," she said, "and you'll be safe from snakes. I can see and smell them."

Leyson shivered. The girl was still barefoot and barelegged. He thought of *sirucucus*, coral snakes, and labarias, with horror. But she had been doing this twelve years and

more, so another night trip would scarcely be more dangerous than others she had taken, with no one with her at all. He could imagine her travelling alone, stalked by jaguars, ocelots. Well, if he could get her away, she'd never have to do it again, that was a cinch.

"How did you know how to reach me last night?" he had asked her.

"My people brought me word of you. I sneaked into the dead city, kept out of sight of the metal gods, and hunted until I found you. It was very simple."

Simple!

Leyson felt ashamed of himself and of Horton. They had made such tough going of their trip into the jungle, until they had been captured by Mr. Zehn, when this girl had been at home in the forest since she had been a mere baby. And she seemed all the healthier and more beautiful for it.

SHAMA was leading them away from the dead city, and the cliff, to the north and east, Leyson noticed. But within a few minutes he was hopelessly lost, except that he followed her easily, and Horton followed him. The girl seemed able to see in the dark, to find ways through the woods where there couldn't possibly be any.

After what he judged to be two hours of it, he could hear the murmuring of water, a sound which grew in volume. Shama led the way through a tapir run to the bank of a dark stream. She hadn't said a word for the last hour, nor had she paused for rest. Both men had gripped their bows, with arrows nocked, all the way, expecting all sorts of horror out of the night—though none came.

Shama led them to a dugout, hidden among the underbrush along the bank of the stream.

"There is another stream, leading into deep valley," she said. "A very small stream, with trees meeting over it..."

"Of course they need water for their work," said Leyson. "They've probably got plenty of riffles in operation."

"Riffles?" said Shama.

"Yes. They're troughs, sort of, in which sand and gravel are washed in water diverted from a stream, usually..."

"Yes, it is like that. Rocks are brought out of great holes in the valley, and broken to bits by the metal men, the shining ones, and then..."

"I get it," said Leyson. "Let's get going. I'm anxious to see how our potential enemies get the gold they intend to buy off South America with. I'll row; I'm pretty good at it."

But Shama would have none of it, and it soon became obvious why. She could handle the dugout faster by herself than both of them together would have been able to do. She turned out of the main stream—having kept to the shadows all the way—into a deep, narrow gut, where the water ran deep and still...

"My people say the water here goes down to the nether regions," said Shama, whispering. "I believe it may be so. I've been here by day, and I could see down and down until I could see no further."

"Which proves it!" said Horton.

"Silence from here on," said Shama.

And silence it was. So deftly did she manage the dugout they could scarcely hear it move through the water at all. But swiftly the walls of jungle and rocks on either hand moved past them. Not even a star looked through the interlaced branches above their heads. The only light at all came from phosphorescent creatures which swam below them, and both men, looking overside, shuddered at the depths suggested by some of those eerie lights.

Shama stopped. She whispered to them to step out, guided each with a quick grasp of the hand. Then she pulled the prow of the dugout up, moored it with a liana, and led the way through the dark, this time on a trail by which Leyson guessed that the men whom they sought to contact were in the habit of reaching the river.

No guessing what mysterious people, from time immemorial right up

to now, had used this dark passage. Any one of them might be encountered at any moment, incidentally, a fact of which both men were well aware. They were on the alert every moment. Shama left the path finally, plunging again into what seemed to be impenetrable jungle, yet which she followed easily, and they followed her without difficulty. She was climbing, so fast it was all they could do to keep up with her.

She came out, at last, into eerie moonlight, upon a flat rock. Leyson looked about him, hunting landmarks. He guessed that the high, mesa-like pinnacle off to his left was the butte beyond which was the dead city, and the robots. He could not see their lights—and their real use was still a mystery to him.

But Shama, sitting on the rock beside him, clutching his arm and pointing, was showing him something he did understand, something that made sense. A mining camp on the floor of a deep pothole. Leyson wondered instantly if the whole pothole had not been excavated by human hands, back down the lost ages of mankind. One day, perhaps, he would find out.

NOW he could see black holes, three of them, leading into the sides of the pothole. There were dump mounds outside each one, and a series of rifles. And going into the mines, and coming out, were constant streams of metal men. These men were not intended to be seen by Indians, or anyone else. They looked dirty, rough. They were metal things created for the sole purpose of labor too strenuous for natives. There was no telling how many of them there were. But Leyson felt reasonably sure of one thing: that each crew, in each mine, was managed by a human being, so located that he could see both the dump and the end of the stope.

A table in a niche in the wall of the mine, perhaps, with all the gadgets on it needed to operate the robots—and men working those gadgets, cool and comfortable, waiting for the metal monsters to bring out the gold.

The sullen, unearthly clanking of the metal men was a ghastly thing, there in that hole. Great pieces of metal they were. Leyson could imagine what a horror those robots could be, if they got out of control. Senseless, soulless, if animated and then allowed out of hand, they could work unbelievable havoc. He sucked in his breath as he allowed himself to speculate on the possibilities; what it would be like to smash all of the tables, while all the robots were working under full power.

"Interesting, isn't it?" said a calm voice. "Why don't you and the unknown lady go down and visit our mine?"

All three whirled to face the one who had spoken, and the four others at his back. No robots, these five men, Leyson and Horton knew at once. A cry of fear broke from Shama, who was on her feet, poised like a wild thing for flight. The spokesman laughed softly, bowed to her, mockingly.

"How could our clever guests have hidden *you* so successfully, young lady?" he said.

None of the three could think of anything to say. The five men held pistols in their hands. Lugers, Leyson noted, on the barrels of which the moonlight glowed sullenly.

"Leyson and Horton, of course, we know," the man went on. "But we did not know of the lady. What is your name, my dear?"

"Never mind that," said Leyson grimly, "and keep your distance. Maybe you've noticed that I've got an arrow nocked, and that you're too close for me to miss."

"Yes, Leyson, I noticed. But you won't shoot because you can get but one of us, and the rest of us can kill you and Horton instantly. Then what happens to the young woman—who hasn't yet answered my question? Perhaps I should be more formal. My name is Heinrich von Glauber. These gentlemen are members of my staff. From right to left they are Franz Klein, Georg Wegler, Hermann Kiesling and Jacob Furst

...and all four are kindly disposed toward ladies, especially ladies who are young and beautiful."

Leyson, sighing, lowered his bow. So did Horton, carefully following the lead of Leyson. They bent and placed their futile weapons on the rock at their feet. Then Leyson came erect like a snake uncoiling, and was halfway to Von Glauber before that worthy could realize that he was actually being foolhardy enough to attack.

Leyson dove at Von Glauber's knees, struck them fairly. Horton was right behind him, instantly engaged with the other four men. Now they were too close for the men to use their weapons, except as clubs. But as the seven men sprawled on the rock in a furious tangle, Von Glauber raised his voice in a great cry.

"Help! Come here at once!"

From both directions, to right and left, the cry was answered.

The adventurous trio had been neatly trapped. It was only a matter of seconds before they would be prisoners.

Leyson, fighting like a madman, struggled up through the pile of fighting men. A pistol muzzle laid his scalp open. But he scarcely felt it. He was looking about for Shama. She had disappeared.

CHAPTER V

Battle for Life

LEYSON fought on savagely, as did Horton, the former handicapped still by his left boot, which had no heel. And there was a grim anger burning in Leyson. Had Shama deliberately betrayed them into the hands of the enemy?

It seemed inconceivable that a creature like Shama, able to avoid snakes in the dark, to travel through trackless jungle at midnight, could have failed to know that Von Glauber and his men were on watch. They had surprised the trio, and it should not have been possible, with the keen senses of Shama as a safeguard. And now she had run out on them. Leyson swore bitterly, suspecting that she, having done her part, had now stepped out of the picture until they should be captured or killed.

All that tale of being something like a jungle goddess! Of having spent twelve years in the forests with the Indians! The kiss she had given Leyson. The whole thing had been a fraud; he and Horton had been taken in like a couple of schoolboys.

"It sort of seems we've been had, Jack," panted Horton.

Then Leyson's partner had come to the same conclusion. Shama was a tool of the enemy, a lure for gullible men. Well, the least Leyson and Horton could do was give a good account of themselves. They had both, as part of their training for their hazardous work, learned all they possibly could about dirty, lethal ways of fighting. They made use of them now, though the outlook was hopeless because reinforcements were coming from all directions.

Leyson caught one of the men with a flying mare, but all his strength behind the hold, and heaved the man over the rock. The fellow screamed. Franz Klein, he thought. He heard him strike, far below, and then there was only silence.

"That's the trouble with ordinary men," said Von Glauber calmly. "The jungles destroy them. Human beings are so soft, as you will discover, Leyson! Take them alive, men! I've work for them to do."

Leyson suspected what that work would be like, and wanted none of it. Two men grabbed him from either side, trying to get their knees behind his, to spill him. He let himself go, swifter than they expected. He sprawled upon the rock, supine, pulling them down with him. As they came he fastened his hands in their hair, and then with all the strength of sudden fury that was almost insane, he smashed their heads together. He meant it to kill, and he did kill; the two men were limp upon him.

A little sick, he scrambled out from under them. Someone grabbed

his left wrist, yanking him erect. On his feet he teetered for a moment, then let drive with a terrific right to the nearest jaw. The blow landed. The jaw cracked, audibly. The man staggered back, both hands to his face. Von Glauber had now stepped out of the fray to issue orders to the others.

"You with the broken jaw," he said calmly, "since when do our men withdraw from a fight?"

The tortured fellow moaned as he lowered his hands and came charging back in while Horton, now standing, and smelling of blood and sweat, swung so that he and Leyson were fighting back to back. Leyson, grimly gleeful, swung another right to the broken jaw of the man at whom Glauber had jeered. This time the fellow did not return to the fight. He staggered back to the rim of the rock instead, teetered there for a moment, then went over. Leyson had a suspicion that he could have kept from going if he had cared enough about living.

There was plenty of cold, calm brutality here, which brooked no good for the future of Leyson and Horton if the enemy took them alive.

"Make them kill us, Rog," he said.

VON GLAUBER heard, laughed softly.

"You underestimate human endurance, Leyson," he said. "You can take far more than you think you can, as we have proved conclusively so many times during the past five years since we started work in this place."

Five years.

Plainly those robots couldn't be the work of a few months, or a year. They argued a laboratory painstakingly brought into the jungle in secret, over a long period of time. Maybe even more than five years.

The battle on the rock was a titanic struggle. Horton was good in a fight; he loved to fight. Leyson could hear him gurgling with delight as his fists hammered a man to his knees, and Horton's heavy-shod shoe finished the business with a swift, deadly kick under the chin. Half a dozen of the enemy were down, but there seemed to be two fresh ones for each one that the two of them put out of action.

Leyson was tiring. Horton must also be. It was coming too soon after their long period of sickness and hardship. But there was no quit in either one of them.

Once, as a series of blows drove his head back, spinning him on his good heel, Leyson thought he saw Shama, far up the side of the pothole, through the trees, watching the struggle. But he could not be sure.

Now many hands were clutching at him. His shirt and undershirt had been ripped from his torso. Nails clawed his skin raw. Fists smashed against his ribs, causing them to crack with their force. But his own fists kept up a steady tattoo on the faces and bodies of his enemies. Von Glauber kept talking.

"I'm really grateful to you two for fighting back, Leyson. This provides my men with something to relieve the boredom. Men become irritable when there is little to do—and no women save Indians, whom we have to treat with courtesy."

Glauber wasn't just talking to pass the time, Leyson knew, but to prepare them for what lay ahead. His plans for them were already set, had been since they had started in this direction after their porters had escaped. How far did the metal men roam? And why? He was almost tempted to surrender in the hope that he would be provided with the answers.

Down below he could hear, through the sound of the struggle, the clanking of the "miners." The work in the three mines went forward as though nothing of importance, anywhere, were going on. He caught glimpses of the metal monsters, like ants on those ore dumps, working the riffles, getting out the gold.

How much gold had been taken from these mines already?

And what did these people know about other mines, deposits of precious stones, and the like, all through this vast unknown area, in which the

Conquistadores had heard tales of El Dorado? His brain reeled, as much with the implications of this mechanized horror as with the blows of pistol butts and muzzles, fists and feet, against his head and body. His lips were smashed and bleeding. His nose was flattened over his face. His whole body was a nest of unbearable pain. He could hear Horton groaning now when the blows landed. The enemy had been told to take them alive, but not to be especially careful with them.

Leyson, before the concerted charge of three men, staggered backward, almost to the edge of the fatal plunge. But hands caught him and yanked him to safety again. His fists were still flailing out, but his weakness was becoming a leaden, ghastly thing. He saw that Horton was down, and that one of the Germans was systematically uppercutting him in the face.

Then, a terrific blow struck him at the base of the skull, and he fell much further into total darkness than he would have fallen had he gone over the edge.

HOW long unconsciousness lasted he had no way of knowing. But when he opened his eyes it was to look into the steel-gray eyes of Henrich von Glauber, and to know by the myriad of sounds and their echoes that he was near a vast room of some sort. The clicking and chattering of many instruments were in his ears.

And the moaning of one man.

Heinrich von Glauber, his face grim, said:—

"The foolishness is over, Leyson. Both of you have been treated for your hurts; you will ache a bit, but you are well bandaged. You can walk about, but don't try anything. I've plans for you, as I told you. Nothing shall interefere with my plans."

Leyson managed a twisted grin.

"The first trick appears to be yours Von Glauber," he said.

"*All* the tricks are mine," said Von Glauber. "They have to be, if I want to stay alive. My superiors are as much averse to the failure of subordinates as I am."

"Nice people," said Leyson, trying to sit up. He managed it. Across a small, brightly electric lighted room from him, Horton rolled on a comfortable cot, twin to the one on which Leyson sat. Leyson knew now that the sounds he had heard came from a larger room beyond a partially opened door. He looked a question at Von Glauber.

"You can see whatever you wish, Leyson," said Von Glauber. "But it is useless to attempt escape."

Finding his wrists so tightly bound behind him that his hands were in agony, Leyson was inclined to agree. He knew the first time he tugged at those bonds that he could never free himself of them alone. Horton was also bound, he noticed when he again looked that way.

"Okay, Von Glauber," said Leyson. "Let's have a look—before grub pile!"

Von Glauber smiled. "Americans never forget food, do they?"

"No," said Leyson. "In my country they still know what it is!"

Glauber, without a change of expression, slapped Leyson, backhand, across the mouth. A coldly calculated act of cruelty which, however, did not cause Leyson to change expression. But Leyson said,

"I'll probably kill you for that before I am done with you."

"Perhaps, though I doubt it. If you do it will still change nothing. Your destiny is now linked with that of my people, whether you like it or not. Come!"

Leyson had been dressed in clothing furnished by the enemy, just prior to his awakening, he gathered, for he wore a complete new outfit, even to shoes.

Glauber led the way into the other room. Leyson gasped at the size of it. There were panels, like stock exchange blackboards, all around the vast place. In the center of it—Leyson estimated that it was two hundred feet wide by three hundred feet long—was a maze of tables, over which a small, bespectacled, hunchbacked man seemed to be presiding,

though at the moment Leyson could not see what went on there.

"Professor Grosboeck," said Von Glauber.

"Professor Grosboeck!" ejaculated Leyson. "Professor Albrecht Grosboeck? The professor of geology who was supposed to have been lost in Brazil's interior fifteen years ago?"

"The same, Leyson. Many others have been 'lost' in the same time, of course. 'Losing' them has been the simplest way to get them here, and no questions asked. Grosboeck has been here all that time. He was one of the brainiest men in the Reich. Too bad, however, he does not approve of our leader! We have to watch him closely, because of his lack of sympathy for our cause!"

LEYSON shuddered, started moving along the wall to his right. Below each blackboard was a table, covered with what looked to be telegraph "bugs," before each of which a blond young man with close-cropped hair sat, while two men worked on the blackboard before them. They were setting down data which, so far, made no sense to Leyson.

"Makes me think of the New York Aquarium," said Leyson, "but don't slap me again for belittling whatever you are doing for the good of people who are already satisfied with things. I wouldn't be able to kill you twice, you know, and I'm not good at torturing people."

"Your tongue," said Von Glauber, "can cause you considerable pain."

"Yeah," said Leyson, "so it can. But it doesn't seem to make *you* happy, either. What's that stuff on the board?"

"Geological data," said Von Glauber calmly. "Notice that the board is ruled off in squares. Each square coincides with a given area of the terrain hereabouts. The data gives us an at-a-glance digest of the essential minerals to be found in each such area."

"And how do you get the information? Don't tell me, I can guess! Your metal men! But how—?"

Von Glauber gestured to the table where the "bugs" were busy. Leyson stepped closer, and understood why the tables were more desks than tables, while the space where the legs should have been were almost solid, and therefore packed with machinery. Before each bug were illuminated squares corresponding to the squares on the blackboard. And in the first square, which was marked *"acht,"* Leyson could see a strip of jungles...

"I take it I am now looking through the eyes of Mr. Eight, wherever he is?" said Leyson. "Standing right here above the square which is Mr. Eight's control, I patrol his area without hardship or danger to myself, and do my work—which in this instance consists in prospecting for gold, eh?"

"And iron, chrome, diamonds, rubies, emeralds," said Von Glauber. "It may be, when we have conquered the world, that we shall wish for some other base for coinage than gold. That's our work here."

"What a maze of metal brains Mr. Acht must have!"

"Quite! He, and his brothers, are the masterpieces of Professor Grosboeck. You see, in our early work in the upper Amazon valley, we were hampered by many things. Even bush negroes, when we could get any of them even to try to work for us, died of hardship, sickness, and snake bite. None of these things affects our robots. And we don't have to feed them. Even the matter of repair amounts to little, because Grosboeck is really a master mechanic. His machines seldom get out of order."

Leyson turned and looked at the little professor whom the world had given up for lost, fifteen years before—and to find whom a score of people, hunting the unknown world of the jungle, had lost their lives.

Here seemed to be the answer. Right now, busy with his pet ideas, the Professor seemed oblivious to everything. But when he was alone in his own room, he must suffer agonies, realizing to what uses his mechanical men were being put.

"Don't feel badly about him," said Von Glauber. "He will go down in history as one of the greatest men—"

"Because he will have loosed on the world the most potent engines of destruction? Because he will have made it possible for his people to wipe out whole nations, overnight?"

VON GLAUBER didn't answer. Leyson looked into several other squares. Then he turned to Von Glauber, who was close on his heels. All in this room, incidentally, wore a kind of uniform, which proved to Leyson's satisfaction that they were military men. He did not study the uniform in detail. He did not need to. For now and again Von Glauber addressed a terse remark to some man. That man instantly jumped to his feet, clicked his heels, bowed.

Leyson did not grin. There was nothing here to grin about. Right here in this room was the force that ruled Brazil, this very minute, though it had not yet proclaimed such rule. And Brazil knew little or nothing of it, as far as Leyson had any way of knowing—though none could ever be sure of all that went on behind the scenes.

"Where," said Leyson, after he had walked slowly down most of one side of the room, "is the master map, on which you plot all this information?"

"A military and economic secret," said Von Glauber. "But it covers an area, roughly, of a thousand square miles, and is being constantly extended in all directions. Within this area we have plotted air fields, anti-aircraft emplacements...."

"And at any moment you can send your miners to those spots to clear the forest, eh?"

"Oh, no, the miners will be kept at their work, moving from mine to mine as each is worked out. We have another force being created for that job, though the miners, and even our 'mappers' and 'prospectors,' can be sent to that work if we have to move before the time decided on in our schedule."

"More and different robots?" said Leyson. "Where?"

"Another secret, my friend."

"You must have thousands of these metal monstrosities," said Leyson. "Why, then, do you need to cater to the Indians?"

"So *that's* where the white girl come from?" ejaculated Von Glauber. "I knew I'd get a hint if I just didn't ask questions. How did you know what we were doing among the Indians—who can be wiped out the instant we desire? Who told you? I thought that girl looked a bit wild! She gave you the information, didn't she? Helped you to escape from the cave below here? Made it necessary for us to call off the pursuit of the robots?"

Leyson shut his mouth like a trap. He had given away too much. And Von Glauber had told him two things: Shama had not betrayed him, and this great laboratory was in the heart of the monolith of stone, the great butte, which rose above the dead city.

"I'm not fooled," said Leyson, when the silence drew out too long.

"No? How do you mean?"

"I know very well she betrayed us into your hands?"

Von Glauber laughed. "You Americans are such children! She rescued you, only to betray you into our hands, when all she had to do was leave you in our hands! Never mind, we'll get her."

"What do you want her for, anyway? Your robots have broken her power among her people."

"But not her natural power as a beautiful woman," said Von Glauber, grinning. "I'm still susceptible to a lovely woman, if she is fresh and young."

THERE was no mistaking the expression on Leyson's face now, and Von Glauber laughed at him anew.

"So she has won the heart of the American secret agent, eh? That's fine. She will be a marvelous hostage in our hands. Knowing that we hold her, even a patriotic American like yourself, who must see that we are certain to win our objectives anyway, will be amenable to reason."

"Just what to you expect Horton and me to do?" asked Leyson coldly.

"To represent us in asking the Bra-

zilian government to surrender. That accomplished, to ask for the surrender of neighboring countries. When they hear what you will be able to tell them, they'll speedily come into our orbit."

"And just when," said Leyson, "are we to do this?"

"Oh, at least a year from now! It will take that long for you to find out everything—and for us to consolidate our gains and make new ones. A year is not long. I believe I could spend that long with the young lady without being bored!"

"I repeat what I said before, Von Glauber," said Leyson. "I shall kill you—before that year is up."

Von Glauber chuckled. His chuckle reminded Leyson forcibly of the chuckling of Mr. Zehn, so that he knew the chuckles were actually the same.

"If you killed me, Leyson, it would go hard with your girl friend. Indeed, as soon as we have captured her, I shall give you the freedom of our headquarters, with no restrictions whatever. That's how sure I am of myself!"

Leyson started to say that he would kill him anyway, even if Shama were sure to die as a result—because both Shama and himself would prefer her death to life among these people—but he shut his mouth tightly on a statement that Von Glauber was far too likely to believe. His vast egotism could not see that any man could be without price. He really expected to win Horton and Leyson over to his schemes, that was plain.

By the time Leyson had circled the four walls of the laboratory, he believed he had found a way to circumvent the whole hellish movement. But first he must make sure that Shama was safe.

"I'm stunned by the extent of all this," said Leyson. "I'd like to think it over. Food and sleep would help, I think, since we've got a whole year. How much gold do you think you've mined to date?"

Von Glauber grinned as he led Leyson back to the room in which he had wakened, where Horton now sat up on his cot, fully conscious. To Glauber that question about gold could mean but one thing: that Leyson, bowing to the inevitable, was already figuring what he could get out of it for himself.

Leyson intended for him to think just that.

CHAPTER VI

The Plotters

"NO THREE people," said Horton grimly, after they had eaten the tapir steak brought to them shortly thereafter, "have ever been dropped into quite such a mess. By that I mean you, and me, and...."

"Shhhh!" said Leyson.

"Meaning they don't know her name, and that therefore she isn't one of them, also that she didn't do us in the eye after all; but I don't know how they could have sneaked up on us if she's the woodsman we know she is."

"Something she didn't know. Rog, I've always heard a lot about German efficiency, but I've just seen some of it. I know how grand their cameras are, their binoculars, and precision instruments, but this business of remote-control metal men—which seem to have everything in them, including the ability to detect metals under the ground...."

"What's so remarkable about that?" said Horton grumpily. "They're run by radioactive elements of some sort, combined with electricity, wireless, and a little of everything else. Why couldn't they find metals as well as being able to heal malarial patients, be troubled by vocal vibrations, and having the power to keep going indefinitely? I could do it myself—if I were a professor."

"Like Professor Grosboeck," said Leyson.

"Yeah. Too bad he's dead."

"He's the real brains behind this place," said Leyson. "He was 'lost' deliberately, by his government, fifteen years ago. His brains, however, are captive brains. Therefore we have

to give him due consideration when we get away from here."

Horton looked at the heavy metal door which now shut them off from the main laboratory, and shrugged.

"I supposed this room is wired for sound, and that every whisper we utter is heard?"

"Probably. Just as the whole laboratory is air-conditioned, to keep our hosts comfortable while their robots work. Just as it is the perfect home in the wilderness for those who use it. Rog, nothing like it has ever before been seen or heard of. Just imagine where we fit in. The jungles filled with Indians, bush negroes, snakes of all kinds, fever, insects, everything that is man-killing. Add to that the most destructive aggregation of forces ever gathered together, and you've got something."

"What?"

"The thing that's got us bound and hog-tied. We've got just one break, but it may mean more trouble than anything else: they haven't yet got our...."

"No names!" said Horton. "Though it probably doesn't matter. Robots aren't interested in names."

"There are," replied Leyson quietly, "as nearly as I could guess, thirty-three hundred of the highly mechanized robots in operation. They work in all directions from here. Through the woods, through the streams, prospecting, laying out landing fields, reporting on tribes, giving our friend Von Glauber a perfect line-up of the whole show. And in his own good time he can send them from end to end of the whole South American continent if he feels like it. Rog, it looks as though we were whipped before we start."

"I've never heard you talk like that, Jack," said Horton. "You must be getting soft, on account of the kid."

"NO, IT'S just an impossible situation, that's all. Listen, what chance do you think an expeditionary force would have against this place? Even if the enemy did nothing but stay in its own bailiwick, they couldn't be reached with the strongest guns that could be dragged through the jungles to be used against them. And if they turned their robots loose against infantry—"

"I'd like to see what a machine-gun would do to them, just the same," said Horton grimly.

"I'm afraid we'll never get the chance."

Leyson, however, had now concluded a careful, minute survey of the cell in which they were housed. He could find no proof that what they said was being overheard, nor that their actions could be seen. After all, the enemy had probably never expected to have visitors. Satisfied that they were alone, unheard and unseen, Leyson backed up to Horton.

"Let's see what we can do about these ropes, Rog."

Horton rose, backed against Leyson, his own wrists being bound behind him, and began to work. He groaned with the pain as he forced tortured hands to their work—hands and wrists in which the circulation had been cut off already by the stout cords. Leyson watched the door, momentarily expecting the return of Von Glauber.

"I wonder how he'll get hold of our girl," said Leyson. "I'm sure he'll make some sort of try, and soon."

"The Indians can't stand against the robots, and if he doesn't really need the Indians...."

"He needs them at first, Rog, or thinks he does. After all, they kill game and bring it as offerings to the metal gods, and the Germans like to eat. Moreover, until their position is consolidated, the Indians are a constant danger to anyone who enters the jungles."

"But he won't mind killing a few, Jack. Besides, if he does, that will simply make the rest all the more abject. Son, he's going to get our gal, don't worry about that. She's a gone gosling."

"He'll find he's got his hands full, just the same," said Leyson. "I wish I could get out of here for just an hour."

"Swear allegiance to the Reich, and you will, " said Horton, grinning.

"Glauber already knows about what your price is."

Gradually the bonds which held Leyson were being loosened. He was in a fever of anxiety lest someone enter before he could be entirely freed. Not that he hoped to do much when he was free, but if he could get Horton free too, they could rush the door when it opened, and accomplish something, if only to get themselves killed and safely out of the mess. But even that could not happen just yet, because of Shama. She must not be left to the tender mercies of the enemy.

Leyson's bonds fell free. In imagination he heard the chuckling of Von Glauber, and so certain of it was he that he looked around the room again, more carefully than before, to find whether there were wires or holes by which they could be seen and heard—and found nothing. But that their feeble efforts would amuse the man he knew very well.

He started working on Horton's wrists, as soon as he had rubbed some circulation back into his own. And as he worked his eagerness mounted. Nothing but death could lie beyond that door, but it would mean action which he must have. This business of being cooped up like a rat in a trap didn't appeal to either one of them.

Horton was free, too. And as though his freedom had been a signal, the door swung open. The two had only a split second to get back to their cots and hold their hands behind them, as though they were still bound. Their bonds had been pushed under their bedclothing.

Into the room came Von Glauber, pulling someone after him. Someone who sobbed as though her heart were breaking. Shama!

THE marks of Glauber's hands were on her wrists. She had been roughly handled. Her scant clothing had been ripped and torn. Her hair was all awry. There were streaks of blood on her face. Her legs were scratched and bleeding. She had plainly put up a terrific fight.

"I told you we'd get her," said Von Glauber.

"They killed two score of my people, Zhack," said Shama. "They let the metal gods go against them. It was a horrible thing. They gathered up my warriors and hurled them against trees. They lifted them and pulled them apart, as though they had been made of paper. They strangled them—and it wasn't necessary! If I knew that they wanted me, I'd have surrendered myself before I'd have permitted them to hurt my people."

"Inferior races," said Von Glauber coldly, "will be wiped out in any event, sooner or later. Besides, now that we have killed a few of the Indians, the others will work all the harder to appease their 'gods.' It was good business, really. However, it's nice to know how you feel, young woman. You would have given yourself up to save your people. Just what would you do to save the lives of your friends here?"

Her sobbing stopped. She hurried to Leyson, put an arm about him. It was all he could do to keep from embracing her and thus giving away the fact that he was free.

"What are you going to do to them? Kill them?"

"Worse than that," said Leyson grimly. "He plans on using us to betray just about everybody else in the Western Hemisphere."

"And I have personal plans for you, young lady," said Von Glauber. "I'm going to leave you here with your friends for an hour or so, so that you can realize, by talking things over, just how hopeless your situation is."

"Let me say one thing, Von Glauber," said Leyson quietly, "before we go a bit further. If anything more happens to Shama, I won't do anything for you, even though refusal means my death."

"Then I have no choice, have I? If you're no good to me, what reason would I have to keep you alive—except, of course, that the young lady obviously is smitten with you, and would prefer not to have you dead, do you see? I'm quite sure we can get together, somehow."

Von Glauber bowed, clicked his heels, backed out of the door. Shama

went into Leyson's arms now, and there was no pretense about their kiss. She may not have known anything about kisses before, but she realized their meaning now, and that her life would be forever empty without this man Leyson.

When she moved back from him, after a bit, she explained swiftly what had happened at the mines.

"I don't know how we were surprised. I think it must have been because I was thinking so much about you, Zhack, that I couldn't see anything, or hear anything. And then, when so many attacked, I knew they were certain to beat you. So, I ran. I knew that I might be able to help, if I were free, because I could go places neither of you could. So, well, as I say, I ran."

"I thought I saw you, far up the side of the pothole."

"Maybe you did. I ran that way. I jumped when you knocked down the man who just brought me here. . . ."

"And his underlings, thank heaven," said Leyson, "would do nothing except as ordered, so nobody chased you. But in the end, what good has it done us? We're whipped. And how long has it been since we were captured by Von Glauber?"

"This is afternoon of the next day," said Shama. "The robots came for me just after dawn."

"And we're stuck. If only we had weapons of some kind. If only we had even clubs, next time that door opens. . . ."

"I've been praying that what I've got will help," said Shama, interrupting. "When the men took you away last night, I resolved to find out everything I could about this place, in order to help if I could. I got into a kind of house, dug under the hill, some distance away from the mines. I'd seen men go there to get something that wasn't very large, because it wasn't heavy to carry. Shortly after each such visit, there would be big noises in the mines."

"Dynamite!" said Horton.

"JUST where do you suppose she'd carry it, Rog? Those laddies must have given her a good going over when they captured her."

"Black powder, some sort of explosive. That house in the hill she's talking about is their powder magazine. . . ."

Horton went silent. Shama, stepping back from Leyson, was running her hands feverishly through her wealth of golden hair.

"Maybe it isn't anything," she said. "I don't know. But from what I've read in father's books. . . ."

She paused, her face very red. Then, "They were brutal to me, those men. I couldn't have hidden what I have anywhere else. I had planned to sneak in some way after dark, and get it to you. I'd have kept on trying until I reached you, or died. But when they came this morning. . . ."

She couldn't go on. Her lips were trembling, and the tears were very close again as she remembered what the Germans had done to her Indian friends.

Now, out of her hair, she brought a small glass vial, tendered it to Leyson. He took it, uncorked it, smelled it, touched it to his tongue. Then he grinned tautly at Horton.

"Care to guess?" he said calmly.

"Nitro, dollars to doughnuts."

"You couldn't lose. If only we had a bit more of it!"

"Oh, I have more," said Shama. "I have several of them, twisted up in my hair."

"Listen, honey," said Leyson, "have you any idea what would have happened if just one of those little bottles had fallen out of your hair while you were struggling with the Germans? You'd have blown them and yourself clear out to Africa, all in tiny pieces. One of them exploding would have detonated the rest in your hair. . . ."

Horton had jumped to his feet, his face very white. Now both men did an automatic and necessary thing. They caught up a blanket and held it so that it formed a net all around Shama. Then Leyson told her to go ahead. He made sure there were no holes in his pockets. Then he put the vials into those pockets, taking care

to put no two of them in one pocket.

"Now," he said, "we can blow this place off the face of the country!"

"We'll also give ourselves a nice ride!" said Horton, grinning.

Leyson looked at Shama, then at Horton, but before he could say anything, Horton said it for him.

"Where's our patriotism, eh? It's our bounden duty, if we see we can't win free with this stuff, to go ahead and blow up the joint, even if we're still inside it. Well, I can go for it, if you two can, though I'm sure I won't like it."

Leyson looked at Shama, who could scarcely be expected to understand things like patriotism and duty. She frowned, not understanding.

"Death comes to us?" she asked. "It is necessary?"

"It may be," replied Leyson, grimly.

"Then so long as I am with you to the last, I shall not mind. But why should it be necessary for us to die?"

"Shama, what would you do if you could have back the lives of the Indians who were killed this morning? To save the lives of those who survived?"

Her shoulders went back proudly.

"I would die, without hesitation."

"That's it. These people threaten a great continent, two great continents. Their masters already rule most of the rest of the world. If this place is not destroyed, not only your people will perish, but so will our people. Or worse, they will be enslaved."

"Then there is no question, is there?" said Shama.

"No."

"But there is still hope for me, while we live, that we may get out of here, and spend years together, among my people," said Shama, looking at Leyson in a way that neither Leyson nor Horton could mistake.

"Or among my people," said Leyson, who couldn't quite approve of the idea of spending the rest of his life in the jungles, even for Shama.

THE door opened again at this juncture, and Von Glauber returned, this time with two underlings.

"So, I'm too late, I see," he said, while both men held their breath, wondering just how much he knew. "It just occurred to me that your lady friend would free you of your bonds. Well, have you people made up your minds?"

"Yeah. We'll see you in Hell," said Horton.

Von Glauber looked from one to the other, as he edged closer to Shama.

"You two seem a lot more confident than you did. Could this girl have brought you . . . but no, she hasn't much of anywhere to hide anything. No, she can't have bettered your position for you."

Leyson took one of the vials out of his pocket, held it up between a thumb and forefinger.

"Oh, I wouldn't say that, Von Glauber. Do you know what's in this little vial, and in the others I have in my pocket?"

Von Glauber's tanned face went deadly pale. He backed away, holding out his hands in protest. He seemed unable to speak.

"Nitro, from your own magazine," said Leyson.

"Not nitro," said Glauber, scarcely above a whisper. "Not nitro, but an explosive invented by Grosboeck that is ten times, twenty times as powerful. For heaven's sake, Leyson, be careful!"

He tossed the vial up into the air. It turned over and over, and he caught it easily on his palm. Von Glauber almost screamed.

"No! No! Even the jar of striking your hand may set it off, Leyson. Listen to me. We can come to some agreement. Be careful with that stuff. Can't you see it must be stronger than nitro, or it wouldn't be in such small containers? Don't do anything rash, Leyson. We can make a deal. I'll give you every possible break."

"Including a break for freedom?" said Horton, softly.

"How can I do that, and let you tell your story before I am ready for

the world to know?" said Von Glauber.

"It seems," said Leyson, "that it's you, and not us, that's on a spot now. Horton, get to the door, just in case he makes a jump for it, and locks us in."

"That would do no good," said Von Glauber. "That thing in your hand will open any door we've ever built!"

"Thanks for the info," said Leyson. "Open the door wide, Horton. After you, Von Glauber. Send your two pals out first, but slow!

Through the wide-open door came the chattering of the countless machines invented by Professor Grosboeck.

"Get Grosboeck," said Leyson to Horton. "We'll take the old boy under our wing."

Horton raced to the owlish little old man, all but dragged him to the tense group at the door. Leyson swiftly told him what had happened, sketched what he hoped would happen in the next few minutes. The professor's reaction caused Von Glauber to sweat like a hippo.

"Gott sei dank!" said Grosboeck, and there was no doubting his fervency. "Please let me explain to the others here. It will be a so very great pleasure!"

"Okay, Doc," said Leyson, "pick up your marbles!"

CHAPTER VII

Retribution

GROSBOECK cried out exultantly. One after the other the clicking machines came to a stop. Grosboeck, while Leyson held the vials in his two hands, and those near him who knew, held their breaths, explained swiftly. The men froze in their places as he spoke.

"Tell them to put their hands up, Doc," said Leyson. "Tell them to fall in on the other side of that bunch of tables in the middle of the floor. What are those tables, anyway, Doc?"

"Controls," said Grosboeck, "for the new army of robots that were to be used in building air fields and anti-aircraft bases."

"How many of those robots are ready for operation?"

"Seventeen hundred and thirty of them."

"Where?"

"In one of the caves below this laboratory."

"Has it any opening?"

"Yes. To the southeast, toward the ruins of the old city."

"Good. I'll tell you what to do about them later. I'm sorry, Prof, but I'm afraid all your fine work has gone for nothing. Now, Von Glauber, I'm going to destroy this place, lock, stock and barrel. Line up your men and get them out of here. And don't forget that I'll be right behind you, and that if I so much as stub my toe, something will happen to the lot of us. Get going."

Von Glauber hesitated. Then he stepped forward, his whole body shaking to shout guttural commands at his men.

"If he happens to be patriotic enough to die for his country," whispered Horton, "and doesn't care how many others die . . ."

"Take a look at his shaking knees. Listen to his voice, Rog," said Leyson, "and you won't worry. I took a chance on all that. Now, Professor Grosboeck, you and my friend Horton here, have a job to do."

"Anything, sir, anything!" said Grosboeck eagerly.

"Go all the way around the walls, and set the apparatus so that your robots will head right out into the jungles. Leave the controls set so that they'll keep moving. . . ."

"But they'll smash themselves to bits against trees, if someone doesn't watch each one of them."

"Which happens to be," said Leyson, "the general idea. Okay, Horton, you and the Professor, get going. Double time!"

Now Von Glauber was looking at Leyson. The man was in a blue funk. He could not take his eyes off those little vials in Leyson's hands.

"Be careful with them!" he pleaded.

"March out your men," said Leyson. "I want you to take them down near the mines. My friends and I want to get back to our boat. Or per-

haps *you* have a better boat, hidden away somewhere."

"There is a gas boat, several miles downstream, hidden in the underbrush. Enough gas in it to take you a long way off."

"Good. Now, march!"

Leyson waited at a far door, halting Von Glauber and his men, until Horton and the Professor had joined them. The professor, his face gray now, was moaning.

"My poor, senseless New People. They could have been so useful to an enlightened civilization. And I am too old to begin again. They are battering their poor metal brains out, in the jungles."

"And we're going to wipe out this camp, besides," said Leyson. "So it can't all start over again—at least not here."

"Will you trust me with one of the vials?" asked Grosboeck. "I am going to cooperate to the fullest extent. I'll stay behind and arrange to blow up my precious laboratory."

HORTON and Leyson exchanged glances, gave one of the vials to the Professor.

Then they followed Von Glauber out of the laboratory, onto a promontory of stone.

"Call your men from the mines, Von Glauber," said Leyson. "Tell them to face every last one of your metal miners inward, into the mines, and give them the juice."

Von Glauber groaned. But he was still shaking, and the faces of his men were ashen. All eyes were on Leyson, and those vials of high explosive.

Von Glauber put a whistle to his lips. Men came to the mouths of the mines. Von Glauber barked at them in German. Leyson heard their exclamations of consternation, but none thought of disobeying Von Glauber They turned back into the mines. Then, after a minute or two, they came running out. From the depths of the mines came the most unearthly sounds. The robots were battering themselves to shattered junk at the far ends of the tunnels.

"I don't think I'd care to watch it," said Horton.

"Nor I," said Leyson. "Just imagine what the other robots are doing, over in the jungles. March, Von Glauber!"

"I can see them," whispered Shama. "The robots, I mean. I can see them, hundreds and thousands of them, crashing against trees like drunken men, caroming off. . . ."

"Losing some of their works with each carom," said Horton grimly. "Poor Grosboeck. I'll bet it almost broke his heart to send them out to destroy themselves like that. I wish he'd hurry up."

"Yeah," said Leyson, "so do I."

"You men know very well he doesn't intend to come with us," said Shama. "Why pretend. He's only waiting for us to get safely away, to . . ."

"Put yourself in his place, Shama," said Leyson softly. "In his place I'd do as he wants to do. Only, I'd take my time about it. Step out there, Glauber! Make for that boat you told us about."

The men under Von Glauber, joined swiftly by white-faced men from the mines, marched along the dim trail to the platform of rock, slid down it to a trail just above the gut of a stream, followed it to the river.

"It isn't big enough for all of us," said Von Glauber. "Besides, none of us wants to go back to civilization. You know what it means to us all? We'll be sent back home, and be shot."

"I know that," said Leyson. "I had no intention of taking you out with us. I just want you to show us where the boat is."

They stepped out faster and faster. Now and again one or the other of the men raised eyes to the sullen, somber butte. In a moment the professor might finish the whole thing off. But the minutes passed and he did not.

"Maybe he's crossed us," said Horton.

"No," said Leyson, "listen!"

THE three stood, while the soldiers marched on. From the jungles beyond the dead city came a grim, horrible jangling. There was

no mistaking its meaning. Grosboeck had really sent his robots on such a rampage as the jungles had never seen before.

The three moved on, Shama talking.

"My people will be crazy with fear, seeing the robots running wild through their hunting grounds."

"Until they get up nerve enough to go look at one of them that's batted all his spare parts out," said Leyson. "Then they'll realize that their own goddess is better medicine. Meantime, we'll make tracks out of here. We may come back some day, but it'll be on a happier day than this. You'll go with me, Shama?"

She hesitated for many minutes, as they walked along. Now and again she looked off down the river, off through the jungles, and Leyson could see that she hated to leave the land she had lived in, and ruled, for so long. When she looked back at him her cheeks were wet with tears.

"They'll be happier as they were before my parents came," she said. "And I guess I've always really wanted to see the land my people came from."

Still no sound of an explosion came from the laboratory. An hour passed, and Von Glauber called a halt, showed them the boat.

"Get her in the water, Von Glauber," said Leyson. "Start the motor. Then get back out of the way."

Von Glauber barked a command. The boat went into the water. A moment later its motor began to bark.

"Food supplies?" said Leyson.

"Enough for three, for two weeks," said Von Glauber.

The three got into the motorboat, Horton at the wheel. Leyson dropped the bottles overside.

"You'd save them a great deal of hardship, Zhack," said Shama, "if you threw one of those little bottles in among them."

"How so, honey?"

"My people will not allow them to live. Once they realize what has been done to them, they will kill them, one by one. They will execute every last man."

"Von Glauber," said Leyson slowly, "was here for the purpose of executing everybody who opposed him. He executed fifty of your people this morning, maybe more. He would have wiped them out. Poetic justice, I'd say, that they wipe him out now. I'm *not* sorry.

"I wonder what's happened to Grosboeck? Do we have to go back and make sure?"

Even as Leyson spoke, the world seemed to shake on its foundations. Waves crashed out from the shaken shore, almost upsetting the boat. The whole top of the black butte hurtled skyward, broke apart, fell back. The earth trembled as though an earthquake had occurred.

The motorboat described a crazy, zigzag course downstream. The trio finally lifted dizzy heads, looked back. Where the butte had been there seemed to be nothing but the jungles, and the tops of the trees were lashing as though a hurricane were passing overhead.

"That," said Leyson, "is that. Now, I hope none of your friends start shooting darts and arrows at *us*."

"They won't," said Shama, "while I am with you."

"Which," retorted Leyson, "will be a long, long time!"

The motorboat gathered speed, keeping to the middle of an ever-widening river.

Suddenly Horton laughed.

"What's eating you, Rog?" asked Leyson.

"I was just picturing the faces of the explorers of tomorrow, who come into this section and start stumbling over the 'dead' robots! Wondering what stories about a 'new race' they'll take back to the world! It *is* funny, you'll have to admit that!"

But Leyson, thinking of the robots, of the slaughtered Indians, of Grosboeck's heroic departure from life, of the slaughtered Indians, of Glauber, could find nothing funny about it.

And Shama, hereafter, would find in life only what Leyson did. Her face, lifted to his whenever the idea occurred to her that she would like to be kissed again, was ample proof of that. But it didn't keep Roger Horton from chuckling to himself.

★ INFILTRATION ★

A cone of blue radiation lashed out and caught the animal. Great portions of the Eater turned red and puffed into acrid smoke, but still it came on . . .

By Clifford D. Simak

People didn't really believe that those weird creatures in the "Monsters From Mars" exhibit were real. But Paul Lawrence, county agricultural agent, wondered. There seemed to be a strange sickness attacking crops, and livestock was being killed mysteriously. Could the beasts be real? Could a strange plague have been imported from Mars? Then the monsters broke loose . . .

CONSTABLE CHET NEWTON polished his star with his coat sleeve, shucked up his trousers and started once again to saunter the length of the midway at the Brown county fair, keeping an eagle eye cocked for disorder.

The barker in front of the "Monsters From Mars" tent was striking up a new spiel.

"Right this way, ladies and gentle-

men," he yodeled. "Right this way for the greatest wonder of the world. Animals actually brought back from Mars. Living, breathing animals..."

"There ain't never been nobody on Mars," yelled a heckler in the assembling crowd. "Nobody..."

The barker silenced him with imperious gestures while the crowd snickered and chortled in enjoyment.

"So you think no one has ever been to Mars," said the barker. "Mister, your memory is awfully short. You remember Steven H. Allen, don't you? The man who landed in Arizona in a rocket and said he had been to Mars?"

"Sure," yelped the heckler, "but he was a fake. He was..."

The barker drew his face into mournful lines, leaned over, assumed a confidential tone.

"Yes, ladies and gentlemen, that is what the world called Steve Allen. A fake! Learned professors examined his rocket ship and labeled him a fake. And the world took up the cry. Fake, they yelled. Fake, fake fake."

The barker's voice rose and soared ...then again the confidential tone...

"But Steve Allen was no fake. He really went to Mars, despite what the professors said. That is a fact the world cannot shout down. And inside this tent are the things that he brought back...animals that he captured on the red deserts of the ancient planet Mars. Animals that are alien to this world..."

Constable Chet Newton yawned. All of this was old stuff to him. He had been hearing it for hours. As soon as the barker started his spiel the planted heckler would show up and shoot off his face. It went big with the crowd. They ate it up. There was nothing like an argument to get a crowd together.

Chet gazed up at the canvas banners that flapped before the tent. Occupying the central position of honor was a larger banner portraying a dragon-like beast with horns and fire-breathing nostrils, with a back that looked like a picket fence and claws that looked like scythes.

The barker was pointing at that banner now and shouting:

"The Eater. So ferocious that mere bars of steel will not hold him. But you need not fear him, for we have caged him in electricity...in a cage of heavy netting through which flows an electrical current. It is the only thing he fears. Nothing else short of armor plate would hold him. To supply the heavy load of power which we need, and so we do not have to rely on regular power lines, we carry generating equipment with stand-by units ready at all times. We cannot afford to take a chance. Listen to that sound..."

He held up his hand and from the tent came "put put put."

"That is the engine running the generating plant," the barker explained.

"Horse feathers," blared a throaty voice.

The barker jumped. Here was something that wasn't on the schedule.

"Who said that?" he demanded.

"I did," yelled the voice. "I been to your danged show six times and I'm here to say it ain't so wonderful. Just a bunch of mangy animals..."

CHET NEWTON saw that it was old Pop Hansen, drunk again. Pop lived in a tar-paper shack on the edge of the fair grounds and every year he made himself a nuisance. Chet started edging through the crowd.

"...I got better animals than that in my little old shack," clarioned Pop in his whiskey tenor. "An' I won't charge you nothin' to see 'em. I got a purple crocodile all staked out and there are green rabbits runnin' all over."

"The man is drunk," yelled the barker.

"You're dang right I'm drunk," agreed Pop, "but I'm a better man than you are, drunk or sober. I'll come up and fight you if you want me to..."

"You pipe down, Pop," warned Chet, who had wormed his way to the old man's elbow. "You pipe down or I'll heave you in the can."

"I'll fight both of you," screeched Pop. "I'll lick the 'tarnal..."

On the outside of the crowd someone was yelling:

"Chet! Chet!"

"What is it?" roared Chet.

"There's a fight up at the cattle barns," yelled the man. "You gotta get there and stop them before somebody's killed."

Chet charged through the crowd.

"Who is it?" he demanded.

"Abner Hill and Louie Smith," gasped the informant. "They're going after one another with pitch forks."

"I knew it," said Chet. "I knew there'd be trouble there. Just as soon as I saw Abner took the blue ribbon on that bull of his'n, I knew there'd be hell to pay. Louie had been braggin' all over how he was going to get it this year."

BUT by the time Chet arrived, puffing from his run, the two contestants had been separated. Jake Carter, elderly and peppery publisher of the Weekly Clarion, had stopped the fight and was giving them a talking to.

"You boys ought to be plumb ashamed of yourselves," he was telling them, brandishing a pitch fork at the two. "I have a good mind to light into the both of you and whale the living tar right out of you. Fighting over a blue ribbon."

"Dagnab it," said Abner, "Louie started it."

"You should have reasoned with him," said Carter.

"You can't reason with a pitch fork, Jake," said Abner. "You know that as well as I do."

"Listen, you two," said Chet, still panting, "you got to cut this out. Any more of it and I'll run you in."

"He cheated me out of that ribbon," declared Louie. "The low-down skunk got next to the judges. I saw him downtown the other night, setting up the drinks for them."

"I don't give a dang what he done," said Chet. "I'm here to uphold law and order and, by cracky, I'm upholding it."

He shucked up his pants.

Carter stabbed the pitch fork in a bale of hay.

"Long as you're here," he said to Chet, "I'll be getting along. You'd ought to lock those two fellows up in a cage and let them fight it out. Maybe they'd get it out of their systems."

Chet spat disgustedly. "They wouldn't fight with bare hands," he said. "Only time they come to blows is when one of them has a club or something."

Carter found Paul Lawrence, the county agricultural agent, in the 4-H building.

"Pretty nice fair, Paul," he said. "Seems to me I can't remember a nicer one and I been writing up Brown county fairs for almost 40 years."

The county agent agreed. "Entry list biggest on record. And the quality of the stuff is finer than ever. I only hope we don't pick up any of those diseases that are breaking out down in Iowa and Nebraska."

"Is there anything new on them?" asked the editor.

The county agent shook his head. "Thought at first it might be hoof and mouth. Then thought it might be blackleg. But it isn't either one. They have corps of government men down there, but they don't seem to be making much headway. Seems to be spreading, too."

"They'll stop it," declared Carter confidently. "Other new diseases have broken out from time to time and they've always got them under control before they spread too far. Tough on the folks down in those sections, though."

"Yeah, it is," said Lawrence. "By the way, how are your roses?"

Carter's chest stuck out. "Better than ever. Grew some new varieties this year. Walked away with all the prizes at the show."

"I noticed that."

"Yes, sir," said the editor, "soon as I can get away from this danged paper of mine I'm going to settle down to growing roses. Nothing more interesting than a rose...no sir, nothing more interesting...

Benny Short leaned his elbows on the counter of his shooting gallery

concession and glowered at the "Monster of Mars" tent.

"How's business, Benny?" asked the dwarf from the freak show two doors up.

"Ain't bad," said Benny. "All these yokels think they can shoot. Some of them can, too, but not with the sights I have on these rifles. Can't nobody hit anything the way I got those sights fixed."

"You look kinda frazzled," commented the dwarf.

"I am frazzled," agreed Benny. "All wore down to the quick. I ain't had a night's sleep in God knows how long."

"Conscience bothering you?"

"Not my conscience. It's that damn engine the Martian people have. Claim they use it to run their generator. Just props, that's all. Props. Something to get the yokels' interest. But why do they have to run it all night long, I ask you? Night and day it goes. Put, put, put. I haven't closed an eye."

He speared a finger at the dwarf.

"You know what I got a damn good notion to do. I got a notion I'm going in there some night and smash that engine all to hell."

"Now you're talking," said the dwarf. "Folks probably would hand you a medal for it. Them Martians have the rest of them all burned up. Taking all the business. And just a fake, too. Who'd think anyone would fall for a thing like that. And while they're packing 'em in, look at us. A good honest freak show and we haven't had a full house for weeks."

INSIDE the Monsters of Mars tent the barker was closing one of his lectures.

He had gotten to Dopey.

"And this is Dopey. You can see why we call him that. He sleeps all the time...or seems to sleep. He doesn't eat much...just takes it easy all day long..."

Dopey, a small round ball of fur, uncurled slightly inside his glass cage and opened one eye. The eye was a surprise. It was red and vicious and sparkled with rage.

"He's always sore when someone wakes him up," the barker said.

He led the way to another glass cage where rested a thing that resembled nothing quite so much as a prairie tumbleweed. Even in the cage, which had little, if any air motion, it was on the go...floating and bumping about, never quiet, never still.

"This is the Tumbler," said the barker. "A bundle of nerves. An ideal form of life for open deserts. Even the slight winds of Mars will blow it many hundred miles a day. We had three of them to start with but this is the only one left. Even our utmost care has failed to keep them alive.

"Despite the fact that these cages simulate Martian conditions, the Tumbler does not seem to thrive in close confinement. To live he needs the wide expanses of his Martian home. We have drained the cages of air until they are almost a vacuum, we have introduced ozone, we have lowered the temperature. We have tried to create for the Tumbler the exact conditions of his natural habitat, but still he isn't satisfied. He wants to roam..."

And now the crowd stood before the cage of the Eater, a mighty beast of dirty yellow, with razor claws and terrible fangs and sharp, wicked horns. His back was saw-toothed, like the backs of some of the old dinosaurs of Earth, and there was a metallic sheen to his hide.

"A siliceous form of life," said the barker. "Formed of silica instead of carbon. Possibly he is the sole survivor of some Martian type of long ago. He alone of all Martian animals needs no conditioning to live on Earth. He could live anywhere."

The Eater coughed boomingly and stuck out a mighty taloned claw toward the glowing net that fenced him in, then cautiously withdrew it. He'd touched that net before.

Benny Short cautiously raised the edge of the tent at the rear of the Martian show. The interior was dark...dark except for a strange flicker of radiance from the operating engine.

No one seemed to be there in the

dark. Except for the engine, everything was quiet.

The last of the lights had gone out on the midway fronts. The crowd had gone home. From far away came the droning of a car.

Benny hitched forward easily, drew himself inside. Crouching, he reached a hand under the canvas, hauled in a heavy sledge. Still crouching, he weighted it in his hand.

"I'll get some sleep tonight," he said softly, grinning in the darkness.

FOOT by foot he made his way forward, took a stance before the dimly seen machine. Easily he slung up the sledge, heaved it high above his head, smashed it down.

There was a brittle crash as if the engine had been shattered into shards. The strange flicker of radiance flared and mounted, seeming to come from nowhere...and suddenly was a sheet of brilliance that for an instant silhouetted the concessionaire and his sledge against the canvas background and then, as he turned to flee, reached out and smothered him.

In the front part of the tent the Eater jerked to stark attention, saw the flame flicker and die in the net around him.

With a cough of triumph he lunged at the netting. It parted and he plowed onward, snapped off a tent pole, ripped through the canvas wall, trotted cockily down the center of the midway.

Chet Newton, making his final rounds before he went home, saw the thing coming toward him, hauled frantically at the old six-shooter in his belt.

The first shot missed. The second struck the beast. Chet knew it struck him. He heard it strike and ricochet wickedly off into the night. He fired again and again, the bullets sliding off the gleaming coat and screaming out over the fairgrounds.

With a yelp of panic, Chet fled. He tore his way up the embankment to the race course, spurted swiftly for the grandstand. Halfway there, he stopped and looked back.

There was no sign of the Eater.

Sitting on the steps of his tar-paper shack, Pop Hansen had just finished one bottle of moonshine, was reaching under the steps to get another.

Then came the sound of shots down on the fairgrounds. He pricked up his ears.

"Some sort of ruckus down there," he hiccoughed. He essayed to rise from the steps, lost his balance and fell back.

"Oh, well," he pronounced judiciously, "I've had enough fun for one day."

He groped anxiously for the bottle, finally found it and hauled it out.

With a crash the fairgrounds' fence came down and the Eater came through. He just grazed the tar-paper shack and went on into the woods, taking down a couple of trees that stood in his way.

Eyes staring glassily, Pop solemnly replaced the bottle, still unopened.

"When they get that big," he told himself regretfully, "it's time to quit the hooch."

Constable Newton was in Sheriff Alf Tanner's office, telling him what had happened, when the man burst into the office.

"I'm the owner of the Monsters from Mars show out at the fair," he gasped. "The Eater is loose!"

"So Chet's been telling me," said Sheriff Alf.

"My name," said the man, "is William F. Howard. I got here as quick as I could. The animal is dangerous. We have to round it up..."

The sheriff eyed him suspiciously.

"Just what kind of an animal is this?"

"'Tain't no animal from Mars," declared Chet. "That's just a lot of hokum. No one's ever been to Mars."

"No, of course," said Howard. "It's not an animal from Mars. But it really is a most extraordinary animal. From Patagonia. A friend of mine secured it for me. Probably it's a survival from the age of dinosaurs. There's some wild country down there...".

"That sounds fishy to me," said

Chet. "Seems if it was a sur...a surv...well, whatever you said it was, that some museum or zoo would have got it instead of you."

"What difference does it make?" raged Howard. "Here we stand arguing when we should be trying to catch it."

The telephone rang, sharply, persistently.

The sheriff picked it up.

"Sheriff speaking," he said, in his best dignity-of-office voice.

A high-pitched woman's voice cut into the room.

"This is Mrs. Jones. Over on the old Blackburn place. You gotta get right over here, Sheriff. Something's out in the barnyard trying to tear down the barn. It's already gone through the chicken house. Something big and awful. Tommy's gone out with a gun, though I tried to keep him in..."

"I'll be right out," the sheriff yelled.

He wheeled from the phone.

"It's over at Tommy Jones' place," he said. "We got to get a hustle on. Chet, you get the machine gun and let's get going..."

BUT when they got there the thing was gone. It had left the place a shambles. One side was ripped out of the barn and inside a dozen milch cows and three horses were slumped in their stanchions and stalls. The animals were dead. They looked like punctured balloons. Each bore a single wound.

The pigs, in their pasture, were the same and all about the barnyard lay the fluffy rags of feathers that once had been chickens.

Mrs. Jones was wailing and wringing her hands.

"All my best pullets," she screamed. "And I worked so hard to raise them. Chasing them in and out of the rain so they wouldn't drown and fixing up the coops so the skunks couldn't get at them."

"I'm going to have the law on somebody for this," stormed Jones. "I'm going to find out where that thing came from and I'm going to make somebody pay..."

"The animal is mine," said Howard. "It escaped from my show up at the fairgrounds. I'm sure we can reach some settlement."

"You bet we'll reach some settlement," Jones ranted. "How would you like a bunch of knuckles right smack in the puss?"

"Cut it out, Tommy," commanded Sheriff Alf. "Mr. Howard has told you he would pay. What more do you want?"

"I'm going into town with you," said Jones. I'm going to slap an injunction on his show. I'm going to fix it so he can't move a foot until he's paid me every dime he owes me. Look at that barn. Cost a couple, three hundred bucks to fix that up and..."

"And don't forget my pullets, Tommy," wailed Mrs Jones.

The sheriff was nodding with weariness when morning came.

It had been a strenuous night. They had tracked the Eater across three stubble fields, through a field of corn in which he had left a broad, unmistakable path. Then the trail had led into Kinney swamp. After floundering through the muck and mud for two hours, they finally had lost the tracks and given up.

Now the wires were humming, calling for help from the state capital. The newspapers at Minneapolis had besieged the sheriff with calls. The Associated Press and United Press wanted statements.

The sheriff mopped his brow and glared at the telephone, daring it to ring again.

Feet pounded in the hall outside and Abner Hill stalked into the office.

"Howdy," said Sheriff Alf. "What gets you up so early, Abner?"

Abner was fit to be tied. The sheriff could see that.

"I want you to go out and haul in Louie Smith," he snapped.

"Now, wait," said the sheriff. "I can't do that without no warrant. I know you fellows had a set-to up at the fair the other day, but you can't..."

"He poisoned my bull," stormed Abner. "The bull is dead...dead of

poisoning and there ain't nobody but Louie could have done it. He's sore because I got that blue ribbon after he'd bragged all over the county he was going to get it."

"How do you know Louie did it?"

"Stands to reason he did. Nobody else is sore at me. And someone poisoned that bull."

The telephone snarled at the sheriff.

"Hello. What now?"

"This is Paul Lawrence, Sheriff," came the voice of the county agent. "Something's funny out at the cattle barns. Somebody has poisoned a lot of stock."

"Abner Hill is here now," said the sheriff. "Says his prize bull was poisoned. Seems to think Louie Smith might have done it."

"Couldn't have been Louie," argued the county agent. "Because his bull is dead, too."

"All right," said the sheriff. "I'll come up."

THE phone rang again. "Well, what do you want?" Sheriff Alf bawled.

"This is Chet. Seems we been missing something. We got a murder on our a hands."

"A murder!"

"Yep. Dead feller in the Martian tent. Burned black as a boot. Pretty nigh scorched to a cinder. He's laying alongside some busted machinery. Looks like he might have busted it himself. Sledge hammer right beside him."

"Who is he?"

"Don't know. But the jasper next door to the tent, the feller that ran the shooting gallery, is missing. Might be him. And that's not all..."

"NO?"

"No, it ain't. There aren't any animals in them cages. Just little heaps of ashes. And I found some trunks..."

"Of course," said the sheriff. "Show people live out of trunks."

"But just you wait till you hear what I found in them. One of them was filled with a whole hell's slew of little bottles...the kind doctors carry around with them..."

"Phials?"

"That's it...that's what they are. And all of them are filled with messy-looking stuff. Another trunk was just oozing with bugs. All kinds of bugs. Packed away, neat and snug, in little compartments."

"Well, I'll be damned," said the sheriff. "What would anyone be wanting with that many bugs?"

"Search me," said Chet. "Maybe you better come up and have a look for yourself. Maybe you could get Joe Saunders, over at the garage, to come up with you. Joe might know what kind of a machine the dead feller smashed. Sort of funny-looking contraption."

"O. K.," said the sheriff, hanging up.

"And this was the day," he said to himself, "that I was going fishing."

Night had fallen. The sheriff sat with his feet up on his desk, hat pulled over his eyes, snores issuing from under it.

Chet was playing solitaire.

Feet clumped swiftly up the stairs and into the corridor. Paul Lawrence rushed into the office, a map clutched in his hand.

"Hey, Alf!" he yelled. "Wake up. I got an idea!"

The sheriff's feet clopped off the desk and onto the floor. He snatched his hat off his face and blinked.

"Dang it," he complained, "can't you leave me alone? Seems like I ain't had a minute's peace for days. Newspapermen and crime bureau men swarming all over the place, pestering a fellow."

"But look here," said the county agent. "Just take a look at this map."

He spread it on top of the desk. It showed the middle western states. Across it a red line snaked across Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota. Several towns were ringed with red.

"Can't make head nor tail of it," said the sheriff, squinting with sleep-rimmed eyes. "Are you sure you're feeling all right, Paul?"

"Certainly I am," said the county agent. "That red line is the route travelled by the carnival, the outfit up at the fairgrounds. Those towns

circled in red are where the diseases have started. Look, Junction City, in Kansas. Disease has wiped out almost all of the livestock there. The wheat is ruined by strange fungi. Insects are playing hell with the fruit and corn."

HIS finger ran along the red trail.

"See, we jump all these towns where the carnival played until we reach Sabetha, then up into Nebraska, skipping towns until we come to Nebraska City. At both of these places the same thing happened as at Junction City. Then over into Iowa..."

"Wait a minute," yelped the sheriff. "Maybe you got something there. You think the same thing is happening here."

The county agent's face was grim. "I know it is. Almost all the livestock at the fair is dead. One man took his cattle home in a hurry this morning, figuring he might save them. His whole herd is sick now. He was just in to see me. He's afraid he's going to lose everything he has.

"And this morning Jake Carter came in, madder than a wet hen. He'd found some funny kind of bugs on his roses. I sent him to St. Paul with some of them. Thought maybe the University Farm boys up there might be able to identify them."

"And you think the carnival has something to do with it?"

Lawrence slapped the map with the back of his hand.

"It's all there, Alf. It hasn't happened every place the carnival has been, but every place it has happened the carnival has played. There could be a connection...I think there is."

Chet dropped his cards and came over to the table.

"Might be something to it, Sheriff," he said. "Remember them bugs I found in the trunk. And those phials might have been cultures. Disease cultures."

"Grab that chap who was running the Mars show," suggested the county agent, "and you might find out something."

"Grab him!" yelled the sheriff. "What do you think I been trying to do all day? We ain't seen hide nor hair of him since this morning. After we got back from chasing that critter of his'n he stepped out. Said he was going to get a cup of coffee. We ain't seen him since."

"It sure looks screwy to me," said Chet. "Why, even that machinery in the tent. Supposed to be an engine and a generator, least ways that's what he told the customers. A generator to supply juice to keep the Eater caged. But Joe Saunders looked it over, what was left of it, and he says it ain't like no generator he ever saw before. In fact, Joe says it ain't like anything he ever saw before."

The phone rang. The sheriff reached for it.

"It's you, Paul. Long distance. Jake calling. Girls over at Central must have figured you would be here."

The county agent picked up the instrument.

"Hello," he said. "That you, Jake? What did you find out?"

"I got them running around in circles," said the editor. "They can't believe their eyes. Say they never saw nothing like them bugs. They say..." he lowered his voice..."they say that if they didn't know it was impossible they'd believe those bugs came from another planet. They don't fit in with nothing ever found on earth. They been trying..."

Central's voice cut in. "Sorry. Would you mind? An urgent call for the sheriff."

"Certainly not," said Paul. "It's for you, Alf."

The sheriff took it.

"Sheriff," yelled the voice. "This is Louie Smith. Hell's broke loose out here. That Martian animal just went through my barnyard like a whirlwind through a strawstack. Didn't miss a single thing. And now there's something going on down in the south forty. Funny calls. Like nothing no one's ever heard before. Makes a man's blood run cold to listen."

"You stay inside, Louie," shouted

the sheriff. "Just stick tight. We'll be there soon as four wheels can get us there."

THE calls in the south forty were enough to chill one's blood. Utterly weird, they ululated into the star-sprinkled sky, seemed filled with all the rage and terror that the world had ever known. And there was about them an unearthliness that made a man's teeth chatter and chilled the marrow in his bones.

Chet cuddled the sub-machine gun against his chest as they advanced across the field.

"Just let me get one crack at whatever's making all that hullabaloo," he said, "and I'll guarantee I'll pipe it down. Did you ever hear such God-awful goings-on in all your life?"

"You shut your trap, Chet," warned the sheriff. "Don't want to scare it off."

The dreadful wailing rose again, this time with a sinister and insistent note.

The sheriff hissed a warning. A tree-studded knoll stood at the lower end of the field and the sheriff pointed at it.

A man stood on the knoll, outlined against the rising moon.

The men in the field crouched and watched. The man stood motionless and from the direction of the knoll came the alien caterwauling.

"Do you suppose he could be doing that?" whispered the county agent. From the lower edge of the field something was advancing toward the knoll. Serrated back and twin horns bobbed and weaved as the creature trotted forward. White teeth shone viciously in the moonlight and the hide of the thing seemed to strike sparks where the moon beams hit it.

Chet raised the gun to his shoulder. "Shall I let him have it, sheriff?"

"Wait," said the sheriff. "It's the Eater. We want to make sure of him."

The Eater was climbing the knoll now and the man still stood there, although the calls had ceased.

"Why doesn't the damn fool run?" cried the county agent.

But instead of running the man was walking down the knoll toward the Eater and to the ears of the waiting men came soft, cooing calls, the kind of talk a kind man reserves for his animals. As if the Eater might have been a pet the man was trying to coax home.

Both the man and the Eater stopped, only a few yards separating them, the man still making the coaxing, affectionate sounds. The Eater pawed the ground, arched his back. The man moved forward slowly, hands outstretched, still talking to the animal.

And then the Eater charged. The man turned, started to run, tripped and fell.

Chet was running forward, yelling, the gun pressed against his hip. The sheriff and county agent followed.

They saw the man flip over, roll away from the charge and struggle to his knees. The Eater skidded to turn, was charging back. But the man had something in his hand, was aiming it at the Eater. A cone of blue radiance lashed out and caught the animal. Great portions of the Eater turned red and puffed into acrid smoke. The blue cone still bore at the beast but it still came on.

The night echoed to the thud as the battering ram of a head caught the man and tossed him. Strange rasping, tearing sounds ensued as the Eater reared and trampled the fallen, broken thing.

There was no outcry from the battered figure on the ground, no sound of rage from the attacking Eater... just those terrible rending sounds as gleaming hoofs raced and smashed.

BUT the dull red glow set by the blue cone spread upon the Eater's body, spread like swiftly creeping fire...although there was no smell of burning flesh...merely acrid smoke that steamed and eddied above the knoll, rising into the clear blue of the night.

Charging up the slope, the three men saw the Eater stagger away from the mangled body, slump into a heap of something that looked for

all the world like a heap of molten metal.

The man was stretched on the ground, body ripped apart, skull cracked open. One arm, torn from its socket, lay yards away. One leg was twisted off at the knee.

And out of the broken skull came something...something that was black and loathesome and many armed. Something that stared at the three with terrible eyes of angry red.

For one long moment it watched them, then slowly crawled back into the skull again. The man's body writhed and twisted, finally gained a sitting position. The jaw moved slowly, awkwardly. Distorted sounds came out of the wagging jaws, sounds that tried to be words and failed.

Then the body flopped down again and the loathesome thing scuttled from the smashed brain case. It darted rapidly away, moving like a furtive crawfish, a terrible, repulsive alien thing that made one's gorge rise by the very sight of it.

Chet's gun snapped to his shoulder and the field and woods reverberated with its yammering. The black thing thrashed and bounced to the impact of the bullets and then lay still.

The sheriff turned angrily on the constable. "Damn you, Chet, what did you do that for?"

Chet lowered the gun and stared at the thing with revulsion on his face.

"It gave me the creeps," he said.

The county agent said: "Perhaps it's better that he did."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded the sheriff.

"Take a look at that body...the man's body, I mean. Do you recognize it?"

The sheriff looked. The moon shone full upon the broken features.

"Howard!" exclaimed the sheriff. "William F. Howard. The owner of the Martian show!"

The sheriff's jaw hung slack. "Paul, it can't be that! It was all just a fake. Nobody's ever been to Mars!"

"Perhaps not," said the county agent. "But that doesn't mean the Martians haven't come to Earth."

The thing seemed less plausible, more fantastic, back in the sheriff's lights...but the proof was there.

"Examine that body," said the county agent. "A clever thing of steel and plastics. Intricate machinery in it, too. Until a few hours ago it passed for a man who called himself William F. Howard. You talked to him, Sheriff. And so did Chet. He fooled you both. He fooled everyone he talked to. Everyone thought he was a man. And yet he wasn't...he was just a machine to house that filthy thing Chet killed."

The sheriff wiped his brow. "Do you really think that thing was a Martian, Paul? That the show really was a Martian show?"

"Perhaps," said the county agent. "If it was it was a clever way to masquerade. Announce yourself as something grotesque enough, impossible enough and you can be that thing and no one will believe you."

"But look here," Chet broke in, "what would them Martians be doing traipsing all over with a show? If they wanted us to believe they were Martians they could have gone to some of these here professors and proved it and if they didn't want us to believe it..."

THE county agent shook his head wearily. "Who can tell how an alien brain would work? Or what purposes an alien brain might hold? Looking at it the way a human being would look at it, a fifth column might be the answer. A fifth column from Mars...trying to soften Earth up before they took us over. That would fit. Enough diseases, enough strange insects removed from their natural enemies, enough fungi would do the trick. They could starve us out...have us beaten before the first war-rocket blasted off from Mars.

"Perhaps they would wipe out some Earth species with their diseases and their insects, establish some of their own on Earth. Most of them probably couldn't adapt themselves to Earth conditions, but some of them could. Given time, the Martians could transform parts of Earth into a little Mars...weeding

out Earth life, replacing it with Martian life. Even now we can't be sure. Maybe the work is further progressed than we can guess. Maybe some of our unwanted, noxious plants really may be Martian plants..."

Chet shucked up his pants and spat contemptuously.

"You're plumb batty," he declared.

"I didn't say that is what happened," explained the county agent. "I said that was what might have happened. That would form a logical *human* explanation. But possibly it isn't the human explanation that we want. From the Martian viewpoint...if Howard was a Martian... the explanation might be something entirely different. Probably would be. We are dealing with a thing beyond our depth."

"There's something wrong, you can bet your eye teeth on that," announced the sheriff. "Something that needs a whale of a lot of explaining. Take that there Eater..."

"An animal formed of silicon instead of carbon," said the county agent. "Probable, not very possible ...but there it was. All three of us saw what happened to it. We know it wasn't flesh and blood. We know it wasn't something that belonged to Earth. It, alone, if nothing else, should convince us that we're dealing with something alien, something from out in space.

"That blue cone that set the Eater on fire is another thing. Looks a lot like a flashlight. Something like a gun, too. But it isn't either one. The scientists will have a holiday with it, if they don't kill themselves taking it apart.

"Then there were the other animals. Too bad we haven't got them. They might give us some more data to go on. But Howard apparently destroyed them when he knew the jig was up. He was afraid that, examined closely enough, they might give him away. And the machine in the tent. Joe was right. It couldn't have been a generator...at least not the kind of generator we know. Probably was used to keep the Eater caged, but just how it worked, we can't know."

"What I can't figure out," said the sheriff, "is why Howard or the thing that was Howard...tried to make up to the Eater. He must have known it was dangerous. But he took the chance...there must have been a reason."

The county agent shook his head. "Undoubtedly there was. Maybe the Eater was his pet. A man will risk his life to help a dog he loves. But, again, we don't know. We're trying to apply human logic to alien motives."

"Look here," challenged Chet, "if all this stuff you been dreaming up is true, what are we going to do about it?"

"Notify the proper authorities," snapped the sheriff. "The state crime bureau. Maybe even the FBI by cracky."

"That's right," agreed the county agent. "We'll have to watch. From now on, Earth can't take chances. There may be others. Perhaps not masquerading as road shows, but in other ways. For what purpose we cannot be sure except that it bodes no good for Earth. Fifth column. Infiltration. Illegal immigration. Call it what you will. It has to be checked. We have to watch...we can't take anything for granted anymore. Lord knows how long this has been going on...how many calamities really have been due to the work of things like these."

Chet shuddered. "So help me, you got me goose pimples all over. I'll never feel safe again."

Slow feet shuffled toward the door. The three men tensed. Pop Hansen stumbled into the room. His liquor-muddled face stared at them.

"Say," he blurted, "any of you guys seen this feller that has the Martian show?"

The sheriff bristled.

"What do you want of him?"

"Thought maybe I'd make a little deal."

"A little deal?"

The old drunkard blinked.

"Yeah, a deal. I got a candy-striped elephant..."

CLOSE TO HOME

(An Editorial)

As this issue of SCIENCE FICTION STORIES goes to press, the war draws ever more close to home, for all Americans. We've all heard about total war, but now those of us who are not in active military duty are beginning to get an inkling of what the phrase means. Just beginning. We'll have a better idea, from first-hand experience, by the end of 1943.

But now, more than ever before, we can see what it means to live in a democracy. In all lands, war has meant sacrifices on the part of everyone. We have heard how the Germans, Italians, and Japanese have had to take sacrifices—we do it differently, here.

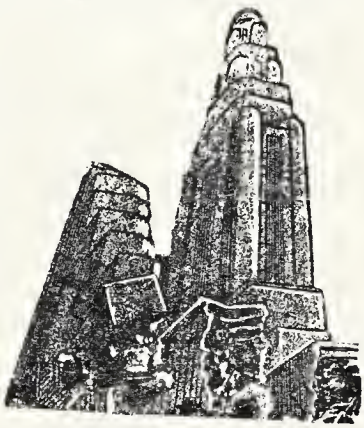
Recently publishers have been asked to accept a cut in the amount of paper they use. *Asked,* mind you. Can you imagine Messers Schicklegruber, Mussolini, or Hirohito *asking* publishers if they minded taking a curtailment for the sake of conservation?

With SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, this curtailment means that we will not be able to add those extra pages you have been asking for. But we're doing the next best thing; we're using a smaller type-face than before, thus adding to the number of words per page, and we're having the lines of type set a little more closely together. That, also, adds wordage.

But the war has hit publications on other fronts than merely that of paper; individual costs have risen to such an extent that we are forced to raise the price of this magazine to 20c per copy. We don't like it any more than you do.

But the thing to remember is: despite the fact that we are engaged in a life-and-death struggle for the preservation of our way of living, America can afford to continue the production of a majority of its popular fiction magazines.

And anyone who has existed under totalitarian rule can tell you that this is no small matter.



Sincerely yours,

ROBERT W. LOWNDES.

BLACKOUT

By Damon Knight

Now if some of Mr. Charles Fort's notions are right . . . .

THE girl's cigarette glowed in the dark, throwing her delicate, child-like features into ephemeral relief. The boy leaned back against the park bench and watched her, noticing with tolerant amusement the cautious way she drew on it, not inhaling — like a little girl drinking a soda through a straw.

He smiled possessively and flipped his own cigarette into the night, watching the swift, fiery trail it made and the tiny shower of sparks as it struck the path and extinguished itself. He looked up just in time to see a meteor fall half down the sky and then wink out.

"Strange," he said musingly. "We know so little, really, about — the stars."

"The stars?" she echoed.

"Yes. We see them every night of our lives, if we look for them; sailors navigate by them; astronomers study them — and yet we really have no idea at all about what they actually are."

"They're balls of fire, aren't they —'way out in space?"

"That's what a scientist will tell you —but how do we know the scientists are right? You've never read the books of Charles Fort—neither have I, if it comes to that, but I've read about them. Fort had a theory that the stars are actually much nearer than the scientists think. And as to what they are —what they're made of—how do we know? How does anybody know?"

THE WARDEN turned as his friend Swift soared toward his lonely outpost. "It's quiet tonight," the other greeted.

"It is," the Warden returned. "But we've got to keep a lookout just the same. No telling what deviltry *they'll* cook up." He revolved slowly, scanning the endless expanse which was the home of his people. Far off in the distance, the nearest populated center glowed, its myriad light-motes clustered in elfin configurations. In every other direction there was only blackness for thousands of light-years; blackness from which *they* would strike, if they came; descending on the scattered cities in vast, deadly hordes.

"But don't worry about it," he added. "Like as not they won't come at all. Our boys haven't been idle—they've been keeping *them* pretty busy on the second front, if all we hear is true. How's your son, Swift?"

"Still in Basic Training. He's doing fine, though, especially in the Cosmics. He expects to be sent to active duty in another three or four units."

"Fine, fine. Wish *I* could go. But there's not much we old duffers can do, except watch for raids and train the young ones. When a man's radiations get down into the ultra-violet, there's no place for him in the army."

They hovered together for a while in companionable silence. Swift gazed curiously as motion caught his eye far out in space; started, and looked again.

"Look!" he cried. "Those aren't our carriers, are they?"

The Warden whirled. "Where?" A group of violet, attenuated, sinister shapes was swiftly approaching them, far away now, but coming closer. "First Cause! It's *them!*"

"Sound the alarm!"

The Warden stiffened, and his energies reached out toward the city in the distance. "Raiders approaching from seventh octant; bearing 4377-0. Warning; Raiders approaching—"

And on Earth, on a bench in Central Park in the fragrant spring night, a girl gasped and then screamed horribly, hopelessly, as if she would never stop screaming, as the stars, group by group, winked abruptly out across the unhuman face of the sky.

THE BACHELOR LIFE

It isn't true what they say about the gay bachelors.

LOVE IN HOLLYWOOD

Sultry, glamorous screen sirens fall in love at first sight with amazing rapidity.

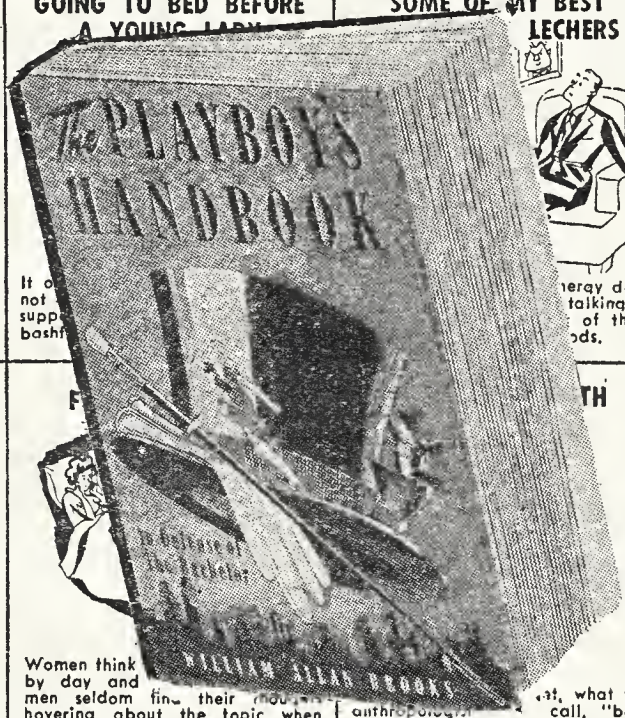
MR. PREBLE GETS RID OF HIS WIFE

How Mr. Preble accomplished his objective without benefit of Reno, perjury or alimony!

HAVE FUN WITH YOUR CLOTHES ON

A challenge to the intrepid playboy to try some of these tricks on his stubborn friends.

GOING TO BED BEFORE A YOUNG LADY



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SOME OF MY BEST LECHERS

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JUST A FREUDY-CAT

"Or Memoirs of a Freudian Nightmare"

the author goes through a series of dreams that are shocking to the point of blushing (all in the dreams).

F TH

Women think
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men seldom fin their
hovering about the topic when the sun is shining.

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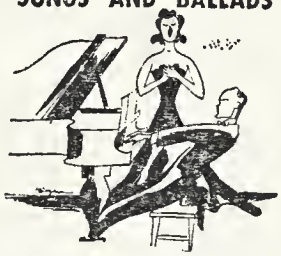
call, "boudoir research in strange byways."

SONGS AND BALLADS



Here's a convivial collection of virile verse, the kind that mother never taught me. Contains your old favorites and a choice lot of new ones.

ADVICE ON THE CHOICE OF A MAIDEN

Benjamin Franklin's classic masterpiece, considered the wittiest piece of curiosa of early America. Only recently released for reading to the general public.

A GUIDE TO WOMEN

Proving that success depends on knowing the right numbers.

THE 99 44/100% PURITANS

Tarrying and Pilgrims warm

THE GREEKS HAD A YEN FOR IT

STAG LINES

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WIT AND

A miscellany of wi prising the wisdom the art of Casanova. of Show and the Socrates.

LIMERICKS ON

Here is a selection of old new limericks . . . and yo agree that the best limerick not necessarily unprintable.

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PROBLEM IN ETHICS

"Marzerth is out to keep their monopoly by using ancient gangster-terrorism against all competitors. They've murdered our best men, and now just kidnapped your daughter, Cheever. And don't think they're bluffing in what they say they'll do to her if you don't give in. But there's one thing that Hammond has overlooked — one way to fight Marzerth and beat it. And, believe it or not, Cheever, it's a problem in ethics!"

★ By Henry Kuttner ★

THEY found young Seton huddled under a bench on one of the cross-town movable ways. He'd been beaten up thoroughly. His face was pulp. His eyes had been gouged out. He managed to talk a little before he died, but he couldn't name his murderers. They were hired thugs from the outlands, some hell-hole on Lower Venus or the Martian badlands.

People who read the newstapes that evening were sickened, horrified, and frightened. Violence in the twenty-first century was unusual—so much so that there simply wasn't any police organization any more. With the abolition of wars after the Big Smash, the world had settled down to doing things the right way. It seemed to work. Eventually capital punishment was erased from the books. Traffic guards had paralyzers, set to such a low notching that they didn't even paralyze.

Hiram Gale, who was a physicist with Commerce, Inc., went to see the big boss, Cheever. Gale breezed in looking malignant and angry, a scowl on his wry, wrinkled face, and a bitter gleam in his faded eyes.

He started things off by swearing at Cheever, who didn't do anything more than shrug.

"Well," the boss said, biting his lips, "I'm sorry, Hiram. But I can't bring him back to life, can I?"

"Blasted jellyfish," Gale said. "I only wish I had two good legs." He dropped into a chair and let his crutches drop. "You're husky enough, Jay, and you're still young. Why don't you do something about this mess?"

"What?"

"Seton was one of my best men. He isn't the first. There've been others. And not only here—all over the System. Pioneers who wanted to change to our new atomic fuel gadgets. What happens to them? Beaten up—or murdered!"

Cheever said weakly, "It isn't worth it, Hiram. Why not let Marzerth keep their monopoly—"

Gale's eyes went darkly cold. "Those filthy, murdering swine!"

"Well—but—"

"Sure, they've got the strangle-hold on fuel for Marzerth energizers—and they want to keep it. Even though those energizers cost so damn much only the rich can afford 'em—unless they're leased at an exorbitant percentage from Marzerth! Which means peonage on the other planets, mister. Secondly, the energizers are dangerous. There've been more explosions—"

Cheever sighed. "I know, I know. Our Atoma device is fool-proof, cheap, and plenty effective. Only we can't get it on the market."

Gale said icily, "Why? Because we're not fighting!"

The man crumpled as Broom's electro-gun blasted silently . . .

"You're crazy! War? Good heavens, Hiram—d'you want to turn back the clock a century?"

"If necessary. The Marzerth people have no place in this era. They're anachronisms. They've gone back to Nazi gangster ideology for their methods. They're succeeding, too, because the worlds have forgotten how to fight."

"Fighting is profitless. That's been proved."

"It hasn't. Not to my satisfaction, anyway."

"This isn't your pie," Cheever said. "Why mix up in it?"

GALE sneered. I haven't been neglecting my work, if that's what you mean—"

"Of course it isn't! You know that."

"I've been fooling around with more than one experimental gadget. My temporal theories are working out; that teleportation formula is proving interesting, and—but the hell with such junk. I'm talking about Marzerth. What are you going to do?"

"There's nothing I can do!"

"Indeed?" Gale said.

"Peaceful arbitration—"

"Has been tried. And failed. Marzerth wants to keep their stranglehold, so they can keep on dragging in money by the ton while colonists and miners on the asteroids and in the Venus swamps and under the Martian mountains are virtually their slaves! Economic peonage! Of course Marzerth knows that if Atoma goes on the open market, it'll make their energizers obsolete. And free their slaves!"

"They want to maintain their monopoly—"

"They want no competition," Gale said flatly. "I happen to know that Marzerth, years ago, developed types of energizers far superior to the original Marzerth patent. If they wanted to convert, they could—and compete openly with us. But that's not their plan. So they terrorize. They find out who's buying Atomas, and use gangster tactics. They get after the men in our own plants—look what happened to poor Seton! He was warned. But he had guts, more than you have, Jay."

Cheever refused to show annoyance. "Violence is never justified."

"Ever heard of fighting fire with fire?"

"I'm sorry. I refuse to organize strong-arm gangs—"

"Okay," Gale said. "Televise Hammond."

"What? Why?"

"Because he's the boss of Marzerth. The so-and-so behind all this. The guy's who's been reading about Capone and Hitler and the twentieth century terrorists. And—" Gale hesitated a moment. When he went on, he didn't look at Cheever. "Because your daughter's been kidnapped."

Cheever's hands froze on the edge of the desk. The color went out of his smoothly-massaged face.

"Marla—"

Gale kept his voice emotionless. "She was kidnapped from her skycar half an hour ago. There were a few traffic guards around, but what could they do against organized crime? *They're* not organized."

CHEEVER'S big frame seemed shrunken. "They wouldn't do that. They couldn't. Kidnapping's unheard of. Hiram, for God's sake, what can I do? They won't hurt her, will they?"

"No. Certainly not. She's valuable as a hostage."

"Who did it? D'you know?"

"I don't *know*—naturally there's no proof. Hammond's too clever to leave clues pointing in his direction. Legally you can't touch him. He's above this milk-and-water law we've got today. But—televise him, Jay."

"Yes. I—what'll I say?"

Gale touched the stud and gave the number. He kept his hand firmly, encouragingly on Cheever's shoulder, and the big man seemed to draw strength from the contact. But his lips were pale.

The face of Phil Hammond showed on the screen, gray-haired, dapper, tight-mouthed, eyes arrogant as Lucifer's. As Gale had said, he was above the law, and he knew it. He was the strong man in an effete century. Now he smiled at Cheever, nodded, and said, "Good evening, Mr. Cheever. How are you?"

"Hammond—my daughter—"

The gray man's eyebrows rose. "Eh?"

Gale's hand tightened. Cheever took a long breath.

"Marla's been kidnapped," he said. "Tonight, half an hour ago."

"Good lord! My sympathy! If there's anything I can do, of course—"

"Hammond, don't play around with me! Have you got her?"

"Don't be absurd. You're overwrought, Mr. Cheever. I am not a criminal! The libel laws....sorry. I didn't mean to threaten you. I can understand how upset you must be."

Cheever made a coughing sound deep in his throat. Gale, out of range of the televisor pick-up, wrote, "Play along" on a pad and held it up.

"Okay," Cheever said, after a time. "Sorry, I—I thought you might be able to suggest something, perhaps."

Hammond adjusted his neckband. "Dear me. Our police are so inefficient—merely traffic coordinators.

I've been forced to rely on a group of special operators I employ myself, for guard duty. I'll tell you what, Cheever—the boys hear things now and then, and it's quite possible they may hear something about Marla. The grapevine, you know. I'll pass the word, and let you know immediately if I can find out anything."

Gale winked and nodded. Cheever said, "Thanks. That—that'll be good of you," and broke the connection. He leaned back, sweat trickling down his cheeks.

"I'm thinking of torture," he said. "That was a favorite weapon of terrorists. Hiram—"

"Take it easy. Hammond tipped his hand. He's got Marla, and he'll send her back, safe, if you pay off."

"Money? He knows I'd do that."

"Not money. He wants the energy monopoly. See?"

"I see," Cheever said dully. "I can't believe it, though. Men can't do such things—not in this day."

"Some will. If they're permitted. The trouble is—" Gale was talking fast, as though to keep Cheever from thinking of his daughter. "—men today, as a rule, aren't conditioned to such vicious tactics. We're peaceful. We don't know how to fight. We can scarcely handle weapons. Only the scum like Hammond's thugs are capable of violence—so they've got the upper hand. The worst of it is that the law's on their side. It hasn't teeth any more. And Hammond has such a batch of attorneys and winds himself up in such a hell of a lot of red tape that we can't touch him. Law suits would drag on for years, even if we had legal evidence. And meanwhile, there'd be terrorism still going on."

"BUT you can't fight people like that," Cheever argued. He was trembling a little.

"It's possible to learn."

"I wonder. I—I don't think I could. If I could save Marla by sacrificing myself—or anything—I'd do it."

"Men like Hammond count on that," Gale said drily. "Luckily, I've a chap who doesn't think as you do. His name's Broom, Richard Broom, and I've been training him—specialized training—for quite some time, Jay. I'll admit, I expected something like this to happen."

"You expected they'd kidnap Marla?"

"No. Not that. But I knew there'd be a blow-off eventually. So—my assistant, Broom. You say the art of fighting has been conditioned out of the race. Well, Broom seems to have learned how to use weapons—and a lot more—in a few weeks. Why not let him try his luck now?"

Cheever shook his head decidedly. "You forget that Marla's life is at stake."

"That's what Hammond's counting on."

"I will not employ a gangster to fight gangsters, Hiram."

"Broom doesn't feel that way about it. He liked young Seton. Did you see the kid, by the way?"

Cheever licked his lips. "Yes, Yes. But—"

"Not very pretty."

The televisor hummed. Hammond's face appeared on the screen, bland and expressionless. "Cheever?" he said. "I've had good luck. Unexpectedly good. I think my men have got on the track of Marla."

Gale's eyes hooded. He swung his shrunken body slightly on his crutches, listening intently.

"Well?" Cheever said. "Where is she? Tell me, man!"

"I can't tell you that. I said—only a clue. It may lead to nothing. But—drop into the Blue Planet tonight. You might find out something, or you might not. That's all I can say."

The face vanished. Gale smiled mirthlessly.

"He's protecting himself. Maybe he wants to make you squirm a little, too."

Cheever stood up. "All right, all right! What's the Blue Planet?"

The televisor directory gave the address; a cheapjack neighborhood on the wrong end of town. Cheever shrugged into an overcoat.

"Want a gun?" Gale said. "I've got one."

"What good would a gun do me against trained killers?" Cheever asked logically. "Even if I wanted to take a chance on losing Marla? No, I'll do what they say."

"Even if it means promising to give up the Atoma patents—transferring them to Marzerth? Hammond will never use 'em, you know."

CHEEVER made a wry face and went out. Gale used the televisor to call a number in his laboratory. As the screen sprang to life he made out in its depths the luminalighted, white expanse of one of his big workrooms, with machinery cluttering it. In the distance was a tall, broad-shouldered figure, back turned to Gale.

It whirled now and came catfooted toward the receiver set—a big man, barrel-chested, with a tawny golden beard and light-blue, piercing eyes. Not a handsome man, but a ruddy-cheeked, strong, dangerous-looking one, somehow.

"Oh, Hiram," the man said. "Well?"

"Hammond's done it," Gale said. "Listen. You'll have to move fast—I only hope I taught you enough in these few weeks—"

"I learn swiftly," said the other, with a broken-toothed grin. "Well?"

Gale explained. "The Blue Planet," he finished. "You have the address? Good. Then I'll leave the rest to you—I can't tell you any more than I have already."

"Very well," Broom nodded. His face vanished. Over the beam Gale heard a door shut with a slam. He dropped into Cheever's chair, idly running one hand up and down his crutches, and looked into nothingness.

Gangster tactics, he thought. Phil Hammond, ruthlessly reviving the ancient brutal methods of the twentieth century, in a world of peace and plenty—a world helpless against this first, germinating seed of discord. Such seeds grow, Gale knew. In the past they had grown. Tyranny, war, fury—and because one man, armed, was so much stronger than another that he could take unfair advantage.

"Ruthlessness," Gale said, under his breath. "Hammond counts on that. But I wonder—somehow—if he knows what ruthlessness means?"

RICHARD BROOM touched the electro-gun in his pocket and grinned faintly in his beard. A simple weapon. Pressing the button meant that a charge of energy would leap from the muzzle and kill. Or maim, depending on the aim. The knife concealed in his belt seemed more reliable, somehow. He downed a whiskey straight, said "Ah-h-h!" in a pleased fashion, and watched, from the corner of his eye, Jay Cheever, at a distant booth in the tavern.

Behind Broom was a televisor cubicle, sound-proofed and without windows. Gale had said that the communication would probably be made by visor. Broom, pouring another whiskey, drank it in a hasty gulp, picked up the bronze-table lamp, and smashed it against the plastic panel of the cubicle. He had strength. The lamp-base broke a jagged hole in the panel. At the sound of the crash heads turned, and a waiter came hurrying over to investigate the damage. He had one hand in his pocket.

Broom carefully replaced the lamp and smiled up at the waiter. "Sorry," he said.

"Listen, whiskers, are you trying to tear up the place? We don't stand for—"

Silently Broom poured coin-units on the table-top. "Enough?" he asked finally, nodding toward the wrecked panel.

It was far more than enough. The waiter grimaced, and then, deciding in favor of the immediate profit, pocketed the money and departed. Broom drank more whiskey and watched Cheever without seeming to do so.

The televisor hummed. The bartender, being nearest to the cubicle, answered. He came out calling, "Cheever. Call for Mr. Cheever."

The executive got up and hurried forward. He gave Broom a wary, suspicious glance, and another at the

hole in the panel. But there was nothing to be done about that now. He vanished into the booth. Something—his hat, probably—covered the break from within. Broom leaned down under the table, as though to recover a dropped coin. He heard Cheever's voice.

"Where? Meet you where?"

"Corner of 96th and Grand. We'll pick you up. Come alone."

Click.

Broom sat up. Cheever came out of the booth, gave him another wary look, and headed for the door. As he disappeared, Broom rose. He saw a thick-bodied, dark-haired man walking forward, a man with a broken nose and the sharp, furtive eyes of a killer. Broom had seen such eyes before. He was not surprised to find his exit blocked.

"What's your hurry, fella?" the squat man asked.

"Hurry?"

"Yeah. You weren't intending to follow that guy that just went out, maybe, were you?"

BROOM looked at him. The man said, "Why not sit down and keep drinking?" His hand slipped into a pocket.

"Yes," Broom said, and sat down again. He poured another drink from the bottle, and thrust the little glass across the table toward the squat man. As the latter's glance flicked down, Broom threw the whiskey into the man's eyes.

He had done this with his left hand. The fingers of his right had already closed lovingly around the neck of the bottle. The squat man swore thickly and tried to pull something out of his pocket. Broom, suddenly on his feet, swung the bottle in a long, vicious arc and crashed it murderously on his opponent's face. Blood, whiskey, and glass flew. The man screamed in unbelieving terror and agony.

Forgetting his gun, he clawed at his eyes. "God!" he yelled. "You blinded me! You—"

"Yes," Broom said. Others were coming toward him, but they had been taken by surprise; moreover, they probably considered this merely a drunken brawl—though even that was cause for surprise, now that there were so few inhibitions for liquor to release. Broom went out of the door with cat-footed swiftness. No one had time to stop him. He ran a few paces, paused, and signalled the lights of a surface taxi.

"Where to, bud?"

"96th and Grand. No. 95th and Grand."

Men were pouring out of the tavern. The taxi driver hesitated, craning over his shoulder.

"Trouble?"

A huge hand closed on his neck, bruising muscles and cracking tiny bones.

"95th and Grand."

The taxi started with a jolt. The huge hand went away. But the driver did not look back till he drew up at his destination. Then he found himself too hoarse to speak; he could only whisper and point to the figures marked in the illuminated band above Broom's head.

Broom paid and got out, watching the cab slide hurriedly off and vanish into the dark. He stood briefly letting the cool wind play against his ruddy cheeks and ruffle his beard. He was smiling.

This was a warehouse district.

The mighty buildings towered like mountains into the night sky, where stars showed in the narrow purple cracks above. Luminous light-bands glowed on the curbs. Broom kept well away from them as he walked toward 96th.

As he expected, Cheever was standing there, shivering in spite of his heavy overcoat. He turned, startled, at sight of Broom, and then recognition came into his face.

"You're—"

"Give me your coat."

"You were in the bar with me. Are you from—is it about Marla? I don't understand this—"

Broom peeled the coat from the other's shoulders and donned it himself. It was too small. Seams ripped. Nevertheless he struggled into it.

CHEEVER was watching him.

"What about Marla?"

"Go home," Broom said.

"But—no, listen! How do I know you're the man I was to meet? They said they'd pick me up. That meant a car."

And a car was coming. Its dimmed lights showed in the distance. Broom carefully gauged distance and threw his fist against Cheever's jaw. Cheever collapsed. Broom dragged him into the shadows and left him. Then, donning the other man's hat, he pulled it low over his eyes, hid his beard in his overcoat lapels, and stepped to the curb.

The car was a convertible flying model, big, dark and sleek. It pulled up, and Broom felt keen eyes on him.

"Cheever," he said.

"Alone?"

The voice was hard, metallic, and toneless.

"Yes."

"Get in."

A door gaped. Broom's eyes were adjusting themselves to the dark. Two men were in the rear compartment, and one in the driver's seat. Big men—and light glinted on their guns, stray beams reflected from the curb glowstrip.

Broom bent his head and entered. The two men moved aside on the seat to make room for him. He sat down, his hands, hidden by the coat, feeling for gun and knife.

The car slid forward, went antigravity, and zoomed upward.

The man at Broom's left said, "Let's take a look at you. And frisk him, Jerry, while you're at it."

"What for?" Jerry said.

He doubled up with a coughing moan as the silent electrogun blasted through the heavy fabric of the overcoat. Broom knew where to aim. The charge angled up through the man's ribs and found his heart. He died instantly.

The other man—

The knife was held in Broom's left hand, his thumb pressed firmly over the hilt's top, and he drove it up, in a deep, slicing thrust, at the man's belly. The blazing cold shock of agony choked the victim before he could scream. And, as he tried to breathe, the sharp blade plunged again, and he died.

The aircar was above the buildings now, heading west. The pilot turned his head, peered through the gloom, and opened his mouth. He didn't close it.

He kicked out, setting the ship to automatic control, and went for his gun, writhing swiftly in his seat. Broom was still holding his electropistol. Instead of firing, he gunwhipped the other. The cartilege of the pilot's nose ripped; blood streamed from his face; he was smashed back against the windslip transparent panel.

That gave Broom time to carry the fight into his opponent's territory. He was leaning over the back of the front seat when the pilot, shaking his head and cursing thickly, lifted his hand to aim the gun. Broom's knife came down, cutting across the other's arm midway between elbow and wrist.

The man screamed.

BROOM caught the gun as it fell. His face had not changed. He listened impassively to oaths that changed gradually to gasping pleas.

"—God, I'll bled to death! Gimme a chance! You cut my arm off—"

"Where is Marla Cheever?" Broom said.

"—my arm! Jeez, you can't—you can't—"

Broom caught the wounded arm and twisted. His blue eyes had an unpleasant, withdrawn glitter.

When the man had stopped screaming, he asked again, "Where is Marla Cheever?"

There was the sound of harsh breathing. "I—I don't know. No—don't! Don't! It's the truth! I was supposed to televise Nichols—"

"Who is Nichols?"

"I don't know. He never shows his face on the visor screen. I—I—"

"Take me to him."

"But—I don't know where he is!"

"Find out."

"*Ah-h!* Uh....okay. Okay. I'll try. Only don't—"

Broom watched the car slant down toward a rooftop. His victim got out, nursing his arm, from which blood was still flowing. It was dark up here, the distant lights of the downtown district a flaming corona against the sky. Once the rocket-jets of a space ship made a comet streak up from the horizon.

The pilot led the way down a staircase, unlocked a door, and let Broom into a small apartment. Broom pointed to the televisor against the wall.

"I'll bleed to death! For God's sake—"

Broom yanked the man into the bathroom, ripped down a curtain, and improvised a tourniquet. He used cold water to swab blood roughly from the man's face.

"Get Nichols."

THE pilot dragged himself to the televisor and spun a number. The screen lit up, but no face showed on it. A clipped voice said, "Well?"

"This is—Macklin. I—I've got to see you—"

"Impossible. Where's Cheever?"

Macklin flashed a glance of terrified appeal at Broom. The televisor said, "somebody's there with you. What's happened? You're bleeding—"

Quick suspicion showed in the precise voice. Broom watched the screen suddenly fade into dull blankness. He pushed Macklin aside and called Hiram Gale, at the laboratories.

"Gale?"

"Here. How is it?"

"Trace this number." Broom gave it.

"All right. I'll call you back. Where are you? Uptown seven—eh? Right; I've got it. Hang on."

Broom and Macklin waited. The pilot was shaking. He fumbled out a cigarette, but couldn't light it. Broom didn't offer to help.

Presently the visor hummed again. Gale said, "Got it. Apartment four, eighty-three Upper Parkway. Phil Hammond owns the penthouse in that building. That what you want?"

"Yes," Broom said. He turned away, picked up Macklin by the scruff of the neck, and dragged him up to the roof. The air-car was still there.

"Eighty-three Upper Parkway. Go there."

Macklin opened his mouth and closed it again. He got silently into the pilot's seat and sent the ship slanting up. Broom, beside him, fondled his beard with a blood-stained hand. The pale blue eyes were quite expressionless.

They landed in a parking-lot not far from their destination. The attendant was busy elsewhere, and Macklin turned to his companion with a questioning glance.

"You'll let me go now?"

For answer Broom's huge hand closed on the pilot's throat. After a time he let go, climbed out of the car, and walked quietly toward the street. There was a movable way here. He seated himself on one of the benches and let the strip carry him along.

He got off a few blocks away, at 83 Upper Parkway. A visiplate was set above the door, and Broom rang the buzzer numbered four. The plate lighted. Nichols' familiar clipped tones said, "Who is it?"

"Cheever."

"You're not Cheever."

"Cheever sent me."

There was a pause. "Oh. You're alone, I see. All right, come in."

Broom obeyed. Along the hall a door was opening. He pushed through it, thrusting back a small, ferret-faced man. Almost absently, almost without looking, Broom sank his knife into the man's body between clavicle and neck.

ACROSS the room was someone at a desk, arranging vials and syringes on a napkin before him. He was almost as big as Broom, but an albino, white-haired and with pale, pinkish eyes.

Standing beside him was a squat, ugly fellow resembling a hairless gorilla. He was reaching for his gun when Broom put an electro-charge through his heart. The man at the desk ducked down and was hidden from sight.

Broom crossed the room in two jumps and heaved the desk over. A weapon glinted in his opponent's hand. The man was momentarily held down by the heavy desk, but his gun was swinging around to aim point-blank at Broom.

Broom smashed his foot down on that menacing hand. The man screamed and let go. Broom pulled the desk away, sat on the other man's chest, and laid the point of his knife against the pulsing throat.

"Where is Marla Cheever?" he said.

"I—I don't know what you're—"

Broom smashed his open hand down, hard, on the other's face. After that, it wasn't a face any more. Broom's big palm kept the albino from yelling.

"Where is Marla Cheever?"

The man gasped something thickly. Broom removed his improvised gag.

"This won't get you anywhere, damn you! If Cheever wants his daughter alive, he'll do what we want! And he'll pay for what you've done!"

"Where is Marla Cheever?"

The albino coughed blood. "Tough guy—eh? Marla's safe. But she won't be unless you....Let me up!"

Broom stepped back and let Nichols rise. Holding a red handkerchief to his mouth, the man said, "You can't get Marla this way. If Cheever wants his daughter tortured—"

Broom's blue eyes showed sudden, merciless laughter. He shot out his hand, swung Nichols around, and bent the albino's up behind his back. Nichols squealed, but Broom's palm instantly stifled his cry.

"Torture," Broom said. "Yes."

"—*uh*—break my arm *ah-h!*"

"Where is Marla Cheever?"

The sweat of agony dripped from the albino's forehead. And there was stark, disbelieving amazement mixed with the pain in his expression. He gasped, "You—didn't hear me—I said—we'd torture—the girl—"

"No," Broom said. "You. Where is she?"

NICHOLS held out for a while. Broom was merciless. The albino could talk glibly about torture, but he himself had never experienced it.

Ten minutes later, his arm broken, his lips bitten through, he pulled himself to the televisor and called a number.

"Nichols?"

Nothing showed on the screen.

"Y-yes. Let the girl go. Let her go!"

"Something wrong? Did Cheever—"

Broom moved gently. Nichols winced. His voice broke with hysteria.

"Cheever did what we wanted! Let her go, d'you hear? Right now!"

"All right, if you say so. Quick work, eh?"

Broom broke the connection. Nichols staggered to a chair and sat down, making hoarse, animal sounds.

Broom watched him impassively.

"Who pays you?" he asked finally.

"Hammond. Phil Hammond. I—I'll testify in court—"

"No," Broom said. "Wait."

A half hour later he televized Hiram Gale. The little scientist was grinning triumphantly.

"Broom? She's back. Just showed up. They let her go."

"Yes. Cheever?"

"He's here, too. A guard found him on the street, slugged unconscious. What now?"

"Wait," Broom said.

Nichols looked up. The big bearded man was leveling a gun at him.

Nichols gasped and tried to fling himself aside. "Don't," he shrilled. "I'll testify—I'll sign a confession—"

"Why?" Broom asked.

"You can't kill me—like this—"

"Why not?"

He shot Nichols neatly through the head. Then he left the apartment and took the pneumo-lift to the penthouse. A butler met him at the door, staring, astonished, at the great blood-stained figure.

"Sir?"

"Hammond."

"If you'll wait—"

Broom laid his fist against the but-

ler's jaw. He stepped over the man's prone body and called, "Hammond!"

"In here," a voice said from beyond an open door.

THE penthouse was big and luxurious. The city's lights gleamed like a fantastic firefly garden through the great windows. Hammond was in an oak-paneled room, a gray, quiet little man drinking brandy and puffing at an ancient pipe. Tapestries of Bayonne and Gobelin hung from the walls. Antique armor and arms were here and there, hauberks, swords, maces, misericordias, and the like. Underfoot the carpet was a rich, deep Bokhara.

Hammond looked at the big man on the threshold.

"I don't know you," he said.

"No."

"What do you want?"

"I am fighting for Cheever," Broom said, "—and for some others."

The gray eyebrows rose. Hammond sighed.

"By your appearance, you seem to have befallen among thieves. You are—wait. I remember. You are one of Hiram Gale's assistants. He hired you a few weeks ago.

Broom nodded.

"I see. And some—thugs—have tried to persuade you to give up your job? Is that it? Well, why do you come here?"

"To stop you."

Hammond chuckled. "That's been tried, my friend. It's impossible. I'm fairly rich, and fairly powerful. What do you expect to accomplish?"

"Your death," Broom said.

There was a pause.

"Don't be a fool," Hammond said shortly. "You're not insane. That's no way to settle matters—"

"It is your way."

"Proof. Proof, my good man. Show me one iota of legal proof—"

Broom lifted his gun. Hammond's pipe fell from his mouth. His hand shook as he put down the brandy napoleon.

"Wait," he said, his voice almost a whisper. "You're crazy. This isn't —justice—"

"Justice?" Broom hesitated. His gaze swept around the room. Coming to a decision, he pocketed his electro-gun, stepped to a wall, and tore down two great swords. One of these he tossed toward Hammond. It fell ringing at the gray man's feet.

"Here is justice," Broom said.

Hammond licked dry lips. "You can't do this," he said. "You can't come into my home and—and—"

"Trial by battle," Broom said. "Take up your sword."

"I won't. You won't kill an unarmed man!"

"A coward is not a man."

Hammond's frantic eyes flicked about, searching. Broom stood leaning on his sword. Abruptly the gray man swooped down, snatched up his weapon, and drove in a vicious, below-guard thrust at Broom's belly.

Broom parried the blow. His own blade swept around, flaming like living light, singing like a harp. The look of blank, disbelieving astonishment was still on Hammond's face when the gray man's head leaped from his shoulders in a spouting fountain of scarlet.

HIS SPECIALTY WAS DIVING!

Joe considered himself a plenty smart leather-pusher. The way he hit the canvas for phony kayos was plenty slick. Then he met a girl who thought he was a great fighter, and Joe wondered if he COULD win a bout!

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Broom wiped his sword carefully, replaced it on the wall, and let himself out of the apartment.

HIRAM GALE and Cheever were in the physicist's laboratory. Gale was making adjustments on a cubical device, complicated and esoteric, and flinging occasional remarks over his shoulder as he worked.

"All right," he said. "So Hammond was found dead a couple of hours ago. What about it?"

"His head was cut off!" Cheever said, white-lipped. "In this day and age—"

"A crime wave, eh? I've heard other reports, too. You got your daughter back, didn't you?"

"Yes. And I'm grateful to this man Broom for that. But Hiram—it's savage, uncivilized, inhuman!"

"So was Hammond's organization. He went back to the twentieth century for his tactics. But he made a big mistake." Gale turned a helix, checking it with a micrometer.

"Eh? What was that?"

"His thugs weren't so tough. They had a veneer of savagery overlying a core of civilization. It was simply a problem of finding someone tougher than they were. Such criminals can't be fought except on their own ground, Jay. The world must learn that. Hammond expected we'd give in—or fight him in the courts. He counted on that. He didn't count on an opponent a lot tougher and quicker on the draw than his own men. He didn't count on a man who was savage to the core."

"A—a murderer!"

Gale shook his head solemnly. "You must learn. The world must learn, too. Men like Hammond must be wiped out. Yes, Broom is a murderer, but he came from a place where murder was natural—where standards of ethics were quite different from ours. In Hammond's organization he saw something he understood—something he knew how to fight—and so he did it, in his own way. The way that worked, when steel could cut through red tape."

The cubical device lighted; a pale cloud grew within it. Gale called sharply.

Richard Broom appeared through a distant doorway. He had not troubled to change his clothing or remove bloodstains. Beard bristling, he hurried toward the two men, blue eyes alight.

"Is it finished, Gale?"

"Yes. You have my gratitude. You have won a crusade for us."

Broom laughed. "This a crusade? These puny fools? Faith, they were nothing. But for the rest, I like not wizardry, and I like not this strange world of yours. I would as soon be in my prison again, held by the Duke, as learn your altered tongue and your curious weapons. A sword is best, after all. But—well, you asked my aid, and now you have had it. So God be with you."

He gripped Gale's hand. The scientist, hobbling on his crutches, turned to the machine and swung a lever. The cloud within the cubicle thinned.

Beyond, dimly glimpsed, were stone walls hung with tapestries. All was cloudy and dark. It is hard to see into the past....

But Broom, with a flashing smile for Gale, stepped through and was gone. The mist thickened again and faded. Then where the vision had been was nothing.

Gale met Cheever's wide eyes, and laughed a little.

"You've guessed it, Jay. A time machine. I told you I was fooling with more than one gadget....I picked Broom out of the past weeks ago, and asked his help. It took a while to train him to cope with modern civilization—but he had his own standards of ethics, and they were the right ones to use against Hammond."

Cheever said, "Who was he?"

"A murderer," Gale said. "By our standards. Didn't you know that Plantagenet means Broom? Your murderer was a king, Jay—Richard Coeur-de-Leon. What do you think of that?"

But Cheever had no answer ready.

THE MAN WHO SAVED ••• NEW YORK •••

Porky's ego just wouldn't stay in his own body, and that, believe it or not, was what saved the city!

By Ray Cummings

OF COURSE, as you know, I didn't figure in the excitement over the Green Giant. The newspapers and the radio boys never mentioned me, or Lisbeth, or Baldy or even Porky Jenks. Why would they? We have kept strictly silent about the whole affair. Not from shyness; none of us are against a little wholesome publicity. But it never does one any good to be billed as a first class candidate for the nut-house. So that Green Giant who waded around in the ocean off Sandy Hook will remain a mystery.

Not that I can actually explain him. I can't. He's as much a mystery to me as to anybody else. But, as it happened, there probably never would have been any Green Giant at all if it hadn't been for me. I don't mind telling the real facts, but I think it's quite a bit safer for them just to go as fiction. You can take them or leave them, so to speak.

And there's another angle to the

thing. The war actually would have been won by now—if Lisbeth hadn't queered it. Hitler would have been smashed and everything would have been just swell. I had it all planned—and then Lisbeth put the jinx on it. I'm sorry about that. But you'll realize there's not a thing I could have done.

The queer affair began last Spring—a warmish afternoon when I was sitting in my study trying to figure out a plot. Porky Jenks came in to see me. I used to know Porky quite well, but hadn't seen him for a couple of years. He was a likeable young fellow, always with a ready laugh which is what made him so fat, I suppose. But this was a different Porky. He wedged himself down, collapsing in my only armchair. His clothes were rumpled as though he'd slept in them; his collar was wilted, hanging soggily on his bulging throat. His thin sandy hair was plastered on his sweating forehead; he pulled out a big blue handkerchief and mopped his face and just stared at me with pale blue eyes that looked haunted.

"Well, well, Porky, glad to see you," I said. "How are you?"

"I'm awful," he declared. Just out of habit, I suppose, he tried to laugh, but it was only a wan, sickly grin. "There's—something the matter with me, Ray. Something terrible. That's why I've come to you, see? You're up on all that nutty stuff—the bizarre, the queer, the unbelievable—"

"Oh," I said.

He stared at me with that haunted look. "Listen," he said, "do I look crazy? Insane? A maniac? Tell me I'm not, Ray."

"You're not," I said. "Cheer up. What have you been doing with yourself? Last I heard you were just finishing college."

"I'm a hardware salesman. Retail trade. That is, I was, but what with the war and all, it's no good."

"Tough luck," I said.

"It's just as well. Walking so much made my feet hurt—they just wouldn't stand it." He sighed heavily. "Maybe that's why I'm in 4-F, too. That and my weight—my heart. But that's nothing serious—"

"Oh well, that's fine," I agreed. "But now—you've got some other trouble?"

THE haunted look came back into his earnest eyes. "I'll have to tell you," he agreed. "After all, that's what I came here for." He gulped. "Listen," he said, "hang onto yourself—you'll get a shock. The thing hit me just about a week ago. Like a bolt from the blue—I didn't have any warning at all. I was feeling perfectly all right, honest."

"What hit you?" I prompted.

"I was just sitting by the window of my boarding house room." His voice had that awed, solemn tone like you use telling a ghost story. "When all of a sudden I wasn't myself at all. I was sitting in the chair all right—I knew that. But also I was a man walking down the street past my window."

"You were—what?"

"A man walking past my window," he repeated drably. "A perfectly strange man—and I was worried because I was late getting home and my wife'd give me hell. I was henpecked, scared to death of her, see?"

"No, I don't see," I declared.

His fat hands made a hopeless gesture. "Well, that's what I mean, Ray. You think I'm crazy. That's why I can't go see a doctor. He'd just slam me into an asylum or something." His chubby hands reached out and gripped my arm. "Listen—you've got to believe me. Anyway—I can show you—give you a demonstration—it's easy enough."

"Is it?" I said.

"Sure it is. You see, my ego, id, personality or something, doesn't seem to want to stay put in my body any more. It—it wants to wander—"

"Let's get this straight," I interrupted. "You say you suddenly usurped the mind and body of some strange man walking down the street—"

"Yes, that's it! Usurpsed! That's a good word, Ray. I was sort of conscious that he was confused, too—my usurping him that way. He kind

of resented it for a second or two—and then I guess he went blank. Anyway, I was in full control—"

"And what did you do? With him, I mean."

"Oh. Well, I remember I decided I wouldn't bother going back to my wife—his wife, I mean."

I could only nod.

"So I went into a Bar and Grill and started to absorb whiskeys and soda and to the devil with his wife."

"And then?" I prompted.

"Well, I can remember getting pretty blurry eventually. Seems like I was telling the bartender all my secret thoughts about the wife." He smiled wryly. "And then I—well, you can't blame me, Ray—it occurred to me I might be getting into some sort of jam. So I just—withdrew."

"Withdrew?"

"I gave that little fellow back his body," Porky said. He shrugged. "What else could I do? I just jerked myself back to my own body—in the chair by the window, see?"

For a minute I couldn't think of anything to say. I've juggled with weird things like that for years—but strictly on paper, you understand. Now, meeting one in real life gave me a creepy feeling. Because Porky was telling me the truth. I wouldn't doubt it. He was plainly about frightened out of his wits.

"You say you can do this any time you like?" I said at last.

"Sure I can. That's just the trouble—sometimes it's almost involuntarily, if I'm dozing, half asleep for instance, I just seem suddenly to slip into it. I got into a nasty jam just last night."

He waited for me to ask him, what? But I just stared at him.

"SEEMS a man and his wife were having a big argument—the room over me in my boarding house," he went on. "I could hear them. I don't know what possessed me but all of a sudden I decided to take the wife's part. So I did. She was a little woman, but when my—my personality got control of her—she'd always been meek, see? Afraid of the big bruiser, see? Well, anyway, it seems I changed all that in a hurry—" Porky smiled weakly. "Sort of hard to explain—"

"I get what you mean. Go on."

"Well, the little woman took a few socks at him which surprised him—"

"I should think it might," I commented.

"And just as he was socking back at her—"

"You withdrew?"

"Yes—yes I did. And that's what worries me too, Ray. Not just for myself—this damned thing, see? It can work injustice to other people—"

"Easily," I agreed. "That henpecked husband getting home drunk, for instance."

"That's what I mean." He was still gripping my arm and his hands were shaking. "Ray, listen—a fellow oughtn't to be able to do a thing like this. It's not normal, is it?"

"No," I admitted. "No—certainly not exactly normal. But you're not sick, Porky? Nothing seems to be the matter with you—except this, of course?"

"No. If I wouldn't be so scared I guess I'd feel all right." He shuddered. "But what am I going to *do?* Want me to show you how the thing works? It's easy enough. Let's look out your window here. You just pick out anybody—anybody at all—"

IT was just then that Lisbeth and Baldy Green walked in on us. Lisbeth is my daughter. She's a nice girl. And good looking—a mop of unruly, wavy brown hair, and a figure with curves in all the right places. She wants to be a career girl—a news photographer, newspaper reporter of the sob sister style maybe, with a big by-line and write feature articles; and maybe hold down the City Desk job and publish the newspaper. A few little odds and ends like that. Baldy is a cartoonist on one of the big dailies. Middle aged, with a wife and six kids. A good friend of mine; and he had just gotten Lisbeth a job on his paper. Neither he nor Lisbeth had ever met Porky Jenks. I introduced them now. And then—because you had to do something to explain Porky's frightened aspect—

and maybe I didn't look too normal either—I thought I'd better explain the problem in hand.

Well, as you can imagine, Lisbeth and Baldy were pretty nonplussed. And skeptical. But Porky, more gloomy than ever at all this discussion, waved away their doubts.

"Then let me show you," he declared. "Pick anybody out there on the street. Anybody at all." He shoved his armchair up to my open window, with us three standing around behind him.

"Will it—will it hurt him?" Lisbeth asked.

"It won't hurt Porky," I said. "But it might very easily hurt the other fellow." I must admit the thing had me pretty jittery. I could begin to see the possibilities of what might happen. The hazards, so to speak. I gripped Porky by the shoulder. "Now listen," I told him. "You've evidently had a lot of luck so far. You haven't killed anybody, have you?"

He gulped. "Killed anybody? Oh my heavens no! How could I—"

"Listen—suppose while you—er—have possession of some stranger—suppose you got killed?" I suggested. "Or committed suicide for instance?"

"Oh please—please be careful," Lisbeth put in.

"It isn't Porky I'm worried about, it's the other fellow," I said. "Look here, Porky—it only takes you a second to—withdraw, as you put it?"

"Why—yes. Less than that, maybe. Instantaneous maybe—"

"And so you'd be sitting here in your chair, but the other fellow would be dead."

"Don't quibble," Baldy said. "Let's see him do it. That's the important part." Baldy also has a good imagination, which is why his cartoons are so successful. "If he can do a thing like that, it's a gift," Baldy added with mounting enthusiasm. "Why, we can capitalize on it in a thousand ways—maybe make a fortune—"

"I just want to get rid of it," Porky said. "But here goes—just so you won't think I'm crazy."

Well, he showed us, all right. A meek-looking old woman with a shawl over her head and an umbrella under her arm happened to come along, and at the busy intersection just under my window she stood looking confused, as though afraid of the traffic.

"Try her," Baldy suggested. "She looks like a weak character. You can take possession of a weak one better, can't you?"

"Doesn't seem to make any difference," Porky said. "All right, she'll do. Now just watch. Keep your eyes on her."

We were all of us pretty tense, I guess. I recall that I was trying to watch the old woman, and Porky simultaneously. There was the old woman, standing on the corner, nervously waiting for the light to change; and then when it did, she seemed afraid to start across because cars were turning from the side street. And here in his chair, Porky just took a good, intense look at his victim. That was queer too. I saw a sort of predatory look jump into his pale blue eyes. And then he sat back in his chair with a hand up to his forehead.

THEN it happened. Down on the corner the old woman seemed to start; for a second she looked dazed; I think she gave a twitch. Here in the chair was a thud. That was Porky's head falling back inert against the chair; and there he lay, motionless, in a trance. Lisbeth noticed him and gave a frightened little gasp.

"He's all right," I murmured.

"Shut up," Baldy admonished. "Look—oh migosh, look at the old woman!"

She was something to look at, no argument on that. The light had changed back, but that didn't stop her. With imperious, if shaking steps, she strode out from the curb, holding up a hand to stop the traffic. By some miracle nothing hit her. And at the exact center of the intersection she stopped.

"Oh-h," I heard Baldy murmur. "She's gonna direct the traffic!"

That undoubtedly was her general idea. She had the closed um-

brella gripped in her hand, holding it over her head as she gestured for the cars to stop, or come forward. It was quite a sight. And in a minute or two there were a lot of sounds —cars honking, the drivers yelling; the grinding, bumping crash of a couple of minor collisions. How long it went on I have no idea. I was pretty scared. The vague impulse came to me that I ought to give Porky's inert body a shake to rouse him; but I didn't dare. What that would have done, heaven only knows. Anyway, down in the street policemen were coming on the run. The scene down there was quite a mess, with that old woman still vigorously telling the traffic what it ought to do. Nothing had yet hit her. Then the policemen reached her; gripped her. The vague thought struck me that Porky would probably think this the proper time to withdraw. Evidently he did. I saw the old woman stiffen and then go limp in the policemen's arms; and here in the chair Porky gave a twitch, with his head coming up, his eyes open staring at me, and a nervous smile on his lips.

That was all there was to it. Just as simple as that....Porky was the first of us to speak.

"Well, there you are," he said. "How'd it work?"

"Take a look," I told him.

He looked. "See?" he said. "That's what I mean. I got her in trouble and I didn't intend it, honest."

Beyond any doubt the old woman was in trouble. Four policemen were telling her off; and then a radio car came and they bundled her into it.

"That's tough," Baldy murmured. "How's she gonna explain it? She'll wind up in Bellevue."

"Well, he didn't intend it," Lisbeth said. Then she turned on me. "Why don't you go down there and do something about it? Get her off —you can just tell them—"

"Not me," I said. "You go. And I'll come to the asylum and try and get you out. This whole thing is crazy, and anybody connected with it—"

"It may be crazy, but it works," Baldy declared. "Listen, you lugs, don't you realize what we've got? A gold mine! Fame! Fortune! Why listen, we'll put Porky in the movies—"

"I don't want to go in the movies," Porky said. "I just want to get rid of—"

"He doesn't have to if he doesn't want to," Lisbeth put in.

"That's silly," I told Baldy. "What would it look like in the movies? Like nothing. Just trick photography."

"Well then, vaudeville," Baldy declared. "The scientific wonder of the age. He takes possession of various people in the audience—"

"Wouldn't *that* make a hit with them!" I retorted. "It would not!"

"I'll bet we could get a thousand a week for it," Baldy insisted.

"I won't do it," Porky said. "I'd wind up in the insane asylum, or in jail. Listen, I came here to see Ray, just to ask him would he please—"

IT was then that the big idea came to me. The war! Money is a wonderful thing, but what with all the publicity the war gets, naturally it's on your mind even more than money. How could we use Porky's gift to help with the war? I've always had a vivid imagination, and this thing seemed suddenly to give it an immense stimulus. Lisbeth was about to tell Baldy and me again that Porky didn't have to do anything he didn't want to do, but I silenced her.

"Look here, Porky," I demanded, "why did you make that old woman direct traffic?"

"I dunno, it just occurred to me. When I was a kid I always wanted to be a policeman when I grew up."

"That's it!" Baldy exclaimed. "His subconscious! You see—"

I interrupted him. "Porky listen, could you take possession of somebody who's out of sight?"

"Sure I could," he agreed readily. "Remember? I told you—that woman in the room above me, arguing with her husband. I couldn't see them."

"All right. Now then, could you—"

Baldy interrupted me. He hap-

pened to be looking out the window. Down the street from me there's an Undertaking Parlour, with a Neon sign of ghastly green. "Say," he exclaimed, "here's a thought! I wonder could he take possession of a corpse, for instance? There's probably one over there in that Undertaker's place. Suppose he made it come walking out! Think of how wonderful it would—"

"I'm thinking about it and I won't do it," Porky declared.

"I should say not," Lisbeth agreed. "Dad listen, he's told you ten times all he wants is to—"

"Don't be gruesome," I told Baldy. "I'm thinking of something important."

"Like what?" Lisbeth demanded.

"The war," I said. "I've got it all worked out."

I told them. And I must say, it sounded even more feasible, telling it, that it did thinking it up. Nazi submarines are always lurking off our coast. We know that.

"Like this," I said. "We go down near Sandy Hook. Porky doesn't actually have to see his victim—that's been demonstrated. So he just mentally selects one of the lurking submarines and takes possession of its Commander."

"Do I?" Porky said.

"You do."

"And *then* what do I do?"

"You have him run his submarine up on the shore and smash it," I told him enthusiastically. "Maybe the crew would get suspicious and stop you? If they did—then all you have to do is open valve and sink the sub. Or blow it up with one of its own torpedoes. I'm no expert on submarines, but don't you see, when you're the Commander you'll know all about them. No trouble at all to find a dozen ways of blasting the whole thing to smithereens."

"And kill himself, too," Lisbeth murmured. "Dad, I thought you had better sense than—

"Not at all," I explained. "In one split second he jumps out to the safety of his own body which is with us on shore. That's been demonstrated. Why, the thing's perfect. One sub gone. Then he jumps into another one! And another! The Battle of the Atlantic is the big hitch in our war effort. You know that. Why, this will—"

BALDY was beginning to get the bigness of my idea. "It's perfect!" he exclaimed. "Why, listen, when Hitler finds his subs just aren't coming back, he'll be afraid to send any more out! Then we can get busy on the Japs. Take a Jap battleship, for instance. Or a Jap General, ordering all his men in the wrong direction! What chaos! What a cinch for our forces—"

"Well, I won't do it," Porky said. "It just wouldn't work and I won't do it."

"Why wouldn't it work?" I demanded. "Lisbeth, stop trying to tell me he doesn't have to do what he doesn't want to do. He does have to. This is too important a thing—"

"It might work with just the first submarine," Porky admitted. "But how do I know I can jump out of the Commander's body with everything exploding around me? I never tried anything like that. Suppose I calculate it wrong and I'm dead before I jump. How do I know whether I can jump out of a dead body or not? I never tried it—"

That made Baldy mad. "Listen, you big hunk of junk," he said, "are you going to put your own personal safety ahead of a chance to win the war for Uncle Sam?"

"More than just a chance—practically a sure thing," I agreed.

"That's because you and Baldy aren't taking the chance," Lisbeth put in. "You two are safe and he gets killed. For just one submarine. It's suicide—just plain suicide and I won't let him do it."

"All right, I'll try it," Porky said suddenly. "I'm no coward, if you go and put it that way. Only I sure hope it works."

I patted him on the back. "Good boy. That's the stuff. Now listen, everybody, this thing will have to be kept absolutely secret, of course."

"Of course — definitely," Baldy agreed.

"We'll just go ahead and do it and say nothing," I went on. "The war will be won in a hurry—and why it got won will be the mystery. Who cares, so long as we win it?"

Well, we planned the thing for about an hour. It was so simple, though, there really wasn't much planning to do. We decided that about eleven o'clock that same night, we'd all go quietly down near Coney Island or somewhere and go to work on the first sub that came within Porky's range. The range was an unknown quantity, of course. But, so far as any of us could figure, there wasn't any reason why Porky's astral body couldn't jump a mile—ten miles, for instance—just as well as from my window down into the street.

"Well, let's go to dinner," I said at last.

"I was thinking I would take Lisbeth to dinner," Porky said. "Just to talk things over, you know." He gazed at Lisbeth with sort of shy confusion I expect you'd call it, and she gazed back.

"I'd like that," Lisbeth said. "Come on, let's go."

"And you be back here by eleven o'clock promptly," I warned.

"Yes, of course—sure we will," Porky agreed.

"Because the war depends on you."

"Should you go A. W. O. L.," Baldy put in—and he didn't smile when he said it—"I will personally see that you get put into an insane asylum for the rest of your natural life."

IT OCCURRED to me to mention that Porky could jump out of an insane asylum without much trouble, but I decided to keep that thought to myself. Lisbeth and Porky departed with more promises; and Baldy and I had dinner and loafed around discussing the thing, waiting impatiently for eleven o'clock. About quarter past eleven Lisbeth and Porky came back. You'd have thought they might have spent the evening soberly discussing the weird, dangerous things into which Porky was about to plunge. Not at all. They had been to a double-feature movie—"Love's Lingering," and "Passion's Pretty Flowers," or something like that. They were very happy about it. But they sobered down when I mentioned that Porky had the fate of the war on his hands; and by the time we got down to the seashore Porky was looking a little white around the gills.

"I sure hope this thing works," he said weakly.

"Of course it will," Baldy and I assured him. We sat him down on the sand. It was a lonely stretch, with the waves rolling up in long rhythmic lines of white and the open sea a deep purple with leaden clouds overhead and a wan moon trying to break through.

"Now then, make yourself comfortable," I told Porky as we stretched him out on the sand. "We'll be right here by you all the time."

That didn't seem to comfort him much. "I sure hope this thing works," he said.

With the fate of the war at stake, I sure hoped so myself; but I wasn't going to express any doubts about it. Baldy and I sat down and lighted up our pipes.

"Just keep your mind on the nearest submarine Commander," I said. "And then jump into him and go to work. Then—withdraw. You'll be back here with us instantaneously and we'll start you right off again, it's a cinch," I assured him.

"I sure hope so," he agreed.

"Nazi submarine Commander," Baldy put in with sudden thought. "There might be a U. S. sub out there, Porky. Now listen—don't you get this thing mixed—"

"It's just plain suicide—that's what it is," Lisbeth murmured resentfully. But Baldy and I silenced her.

And then Porky went to work. He was stretched on the sand with head and shoulders propped up by his elbows behind him. We all held our breaths. For a minute or two Porky just stared moodily out at the purple sea. Concentrating. Lisbeth was sitting beside him; she seemed afraid to look at him.

"I won't let him do it," she muttered.

"Shut up," Baldy growled. "You'll break the spell."

Then suddenly Porky gave a twitch. His body stiffened, then went limp. There was a little thud as his head and shoulders fell back onto the sand. Lisbeth gave a suppressed cry. Baldy and I exhaled; and then went back to puffing at our pipes. You've got to have poise in a thing like that; take it in stride, so to speak.

"Well, he's at work," Baldy murmured at last. "Pretty soon we ought to be getting results."

"Yes," I agreed. "I'll bet those Nazi sailors on the sub are getting kind of surprised, just about now."

I could picture it. A startled wonderment spreading around the sub at the queer actions of the Commander. Or maybe the whole thing was exploding just about now.

More time passed. On the sand beside us Porky's body lay inert. You could hardly tell that he wasn't dead. I could feel Lisbeth's gaze roving Baldy and me as though we were a couple of murderers. Then all of a sudden Lisbeth gave a sharp, startled cry.

"Oh, my heavens! Look! Look there!"

We all saw it at once. Out in front of us, half a mile out maybe, the purple sea suddenly heaved up. There was a great cascade of water out of which a monstrous dark green shape rose towering two or three hundred feet into the air. The Green Giant! There he was. How can I describe him? I can't. Not adequately, because he was too awesome, too weird, too incredible—but there he was. A great green man-shape.

THE pallid moonlight shone on him—a green giant who must have been five or six hundred feet tall. He was wading waist deep in the water—wading, not at us, thank heavens, but parallel to the beach, toward Sandy Hook by the entrance to New York Harbor. The moonlight shone on his glistening torso—green scales and a slimy sea-look as though algae and barnacles might be clustered on it. A Green Giant almost in human form. Anyway, I remember that he had a browny chest that bulged out over the ocean surface; wide thick shoulders and monstrous arms that dangled down into the water as he strode forward, with a line of white waves churning at his waist. I saw his face plainly. You couldn't call it human, but that was its general idea. He was breathing through his mouth now with a snort that was a gruesome rumbling roar; but I could see that he had gills or some such apparatus in the sides of his neck.

For a minute maybe Baldy and I and Lisbeth must have just sat there stricken, numb, with the body of Porky beside us. And then suddenly an immense amount of amazing things began to happen all more or less simultaneously. In the town behind us the air-raid siren began wailing. Then searchlights from several spots on shore sprang like great waving silver swords in the sky. Then, far out to sea there was the drone of planes.

An air raid! New York City being raided by Nazi planes! The Green Giant had nothing to do with the first alarm here on shore. It was planes coming in from the ocean. We heard them; and in a few seconds we saw them—four of them, flying low; Nazi planes—the moonlight disclosed it. Who am I to try to picture exactly what happened next? It was quite a chaos. All I can remember is that one of the planes swerved low pretty close over the Green Giant. I imagine that Nazi pilot was sort of startled—can you blame him? Anyway, suddenly the giant let out a bellow of anger; his hand reached up a hundred feet or so over his head and grabbed the plane — seized it, crunched it maybe and then flung it away. The plane was a long finger of yellow-red flames as it fell hissing into the sea.

I recall I heard Baldy mutter: "Ah —good work! Very neat!"

Good work! That tipped me off. I admit that in all the chaos the main fact had not yet occurred to me. You've guessed it. Porky! By some mischance for Hitler, quite evidently Der Fuehrer had selected this particular night for his threatened

bombing of New York. Here were his bombing planes—four of them. And there was Porky, in the person of that astonishing green giant, going to work on them. Those Nazi pilots evidently got rattled. They gave up their ideas of heading up the bay and for a moment were circling here like a flock of confused birds. They were too far away now for Porky to clutch at them, so he stooped. One of his hands came up out of the sea with a monstrous dripping boulder. He flung it, and another plane crashed.

There was worse than chaos out in front of us now. A lot of our own planes were coming, interceptors that went like wasps after the two remaining Nazis. One of Hitler's prides seemed to be shot down; and Porky accounted for the other one—that green giant leaped into the air with a marvelous standing high jump, grabbed the Nazi plane with both hands and tore it into bits. But now a new element entered into the thing. Hitler evidently had a few subs around here. One of them obviously let loose a couple of torpedos at the giant. Distinctly I saw two explosions at the giant's waistline—torpedos that must have gone right into him and exploded inside. Anyway, he doubled up with a bellowing roar of pain that rattled our ear-drums and then he went down, sinking with a cataclysmic rush of white waves over him.

I recall my fleeting thought that this would be just the proper time for Porky to withdraw. And he did. As the green giant fell and disappeared, the body of Porky here on the sand gave a convulsive shudder and in another instant Porky was sitting up, blinking, with a hand rubbing his forehead, and the other hand shoving away Lisbeth who was clutching at him.

"W-well," Porky said. "Here you are. What happened?"

"Plenty," I said. "A very great deal. But you did fine, Porky."

BALDY was on his feet, holding off Lisbeth who was struggling to get at Porky. "Say, listen, you lug," Baldy demanded, "where in the devil did you ever pick up that giant? It happened to work out all right, but—"

"Why—I dunno," Porky said. "He was just lying around down there—"

"On his way in from Atlantis maybe?" Baldy was sarcastic.

"I dunno. I was concentrating on a sub Commander—how bestial they are—you know, that sort of stuff—and all of a sudden I sort of slid into that giant." Porky shuddered. "It was—horrible. But — when I saw those Nazi planes, I did my best."

"You did wonderful," I agreed.

LET THE LIVING BEWARE!

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CRACK DETECTIVE

JULY ISSUE NOW ON SALE

"You saved New York from maybe a nasty air raid. Now listen, the U-boat Commanders are still out there. All we have to do—"

"If we had any sense we'd be getting out of here before we get into *real* trouble," Lisbeth observed suddenly.

I could see that she had something there. This section of the beach was no longer lonely. Spectators were beginning to mill around; and there were Coast Guards, with searchlights darting at us, and planes roaring overhead.

"Come on, let's duck," I agreed. "We'll come back tomorrow night when things have quieted down a bit."

Baldy and I planned it enthusiastically all the way back to the city. Barring the sudden advent of green giants and such, the thing obviously was absolutely simple. We four could tour all the coasts. And then maybe arrange to get abroad. I figured three months—if Porky could hold out—would wind up the war.

That next day, Baldy and I made charts in regular military fashion, outlining our exact plan of campaign. We didn't see Porky or Lisbeth that afternoon, or evening. They had wanted to have dinner together again, but had promised faithfully to report at my study by eleven p. m. They came, right on the dot. And they were both beaming.

"Well," I said. "Here you are. That's fine. And you look in good shape for a swell night's work, Porky."

"Yes, sir," Porky agreed. "I'm all right. But you see, sir—there's—er—something we want to tell you."

That "sir" sounded sort of queer, but I admit I didn't get the idea.

"He loves me and I love him and so it's all settled," Lisbeth said.

I saw that Baldy looked startled. What I looked like I don't know. "What's all settled?" I demanded.

"Us—er—we're engaged," Porky stammered. "That is—"

"It absolutely is," Lisbeth beamed. "He loves me and I love him. Definitely."

To say that I was nonplussed would be putting it mildly. But I have always prided myself on having a true sense of values. What's the problem of a daughter compared to the problem of winning the war? Nothing. Nothing at all.

"Well, we'll talk about that later," I decided firmly. "Right now we've got a war on our hands. Come on, let's get going."

But Porky didn't look at all as thought he were ready to start. "Well," he said, "that's another thing I—er—have to tell you." He looked very pleased. "I haven't got it any more. I've lost it."

Baldy came to life. "What's *that* mean?" he demanded. "What in the devil haven't you got any more? What have you lost?"

"My—my gift—that's what you called it," Porky said. "It's gone. Vanished. I can't do it any more. I tried—honest I did—but it's gone."

Lisbeth made an expressive gesture like one who wants to indicate that a fairy has just flown out the window.

"He tried," she said. "He really did."

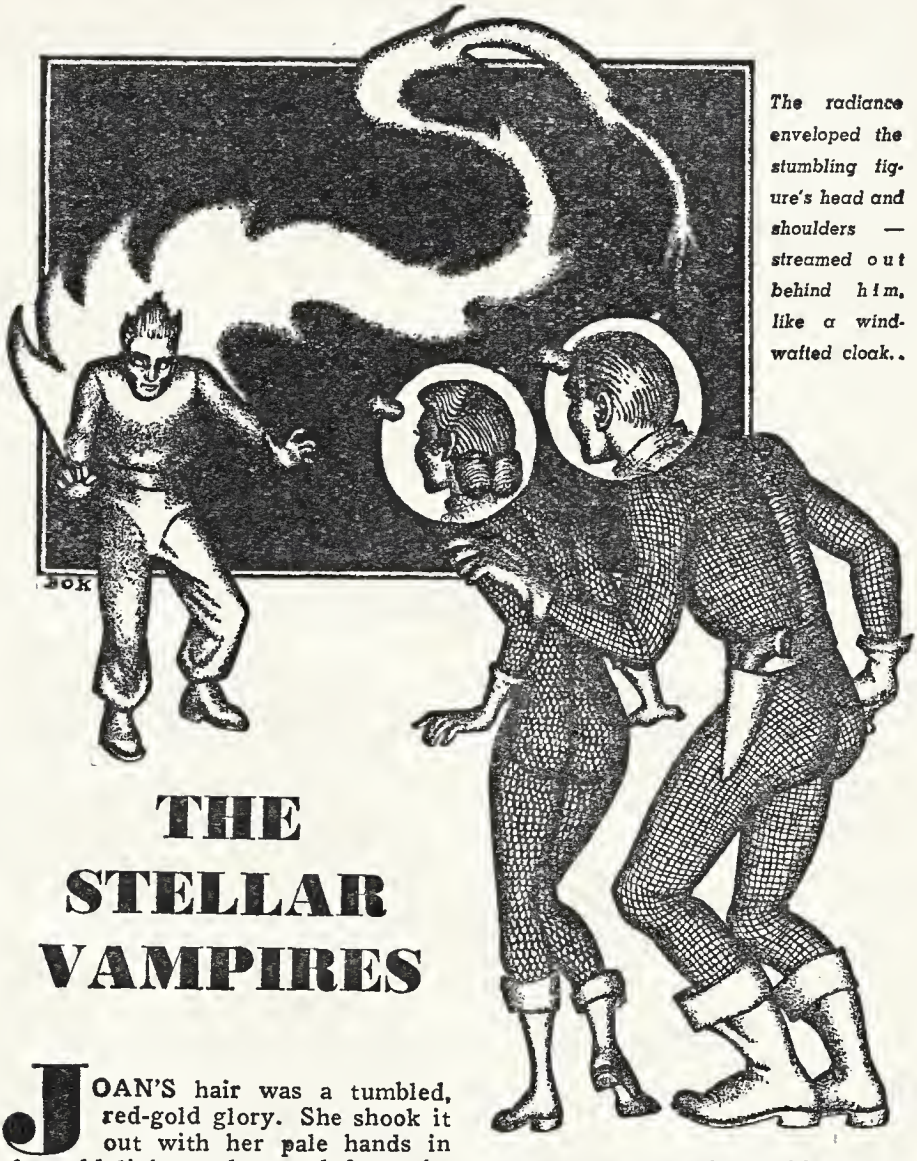
"I'm no coward," Porky added. "Didn't I do fine last night? But it's gone—I'm quite normal now." He said that last with a very evident relish.

"Because now your soul and heart and ego and such are all tied up with Lisbeth," Baldy said sarcastically.

"That's it," Lisbeth retorted. "And you don't need to be sarcastic about it. He and I figured it all out—why would his ego want to roam abroad when it's in my keeping—forever?" She and Porky were holding onto each other's hands and gazing with that dying calf look. "He belongs to me now," Lisbeth added. "His ego doesn't want to go adventuring. Besides, if it did, I wouldn't let it."

And there you are. I'm sorry about not being personally able to win the war, but you can see, there wasn't a thing I could do about it.

THE END



The radiance enveloped the stumbling figure's head and shoulders — streamed out behind him, like a wind-wafted cloak..

THE STELLAR VAMPIRES

Strange and utterly terrible were the flame-creatures who came out of nowhere to feast upon the life-energies of spacemen, stranded on Mars. But even more strange was the message Captain Jim received from the besieged Hardy: "We walk alone!"

By Frank Belknap Long

JOAN'S hair was a tumbled, red-gold glory. She shook it out with her pale hands in the cold light, and turned from the viewport, stared straight at me.

"Jim, I'm frightened," she said. "Why couldn't they have signaled: 'We need help badly' or 'Emergency —come at once.' Why did they waste powder on a message that just doesn't make sense?"

"Well, we'll know in a few hours," I said. "Speculating about it won't

increase our field drive, or give Hardy a shred of comfort."

Through the viewport, Mars looked a good deal like a huge copper coin flecked with blue-green verdigris. On both sides of it in the cosmic treasure chest, jewels sparkled, and there was a shawl of fine-spun gossamer in there, too—which could have been a spiral nebula.

But all that stellar booty failed to interest me now. My nerves were taut as banjo strings; my eyes were riveted on the bronze coin, and the mottlings which were the funguslike plants of Mars, basking in the lush warmth of a perihelion summer. In a short while now, the warmth would become a withering blight and the polar ice caps would vanish completely.

You can't do much exploring when the thermometer drops to minus ninety, Fahrenheit, on tropical nights and rises to a steamy one hundred and six at high noon. Normally, Hardy's command and my command would have gone rocketing back to Earth at the height of the summer solstice.

But there was nothing normal about a gravity plate that had resisted the tug of Mars only to buckle on little Phobos, crippling our ship on a blue moon that traveled in the wrong direction, and possessed a diameter of only eight minutes of arc when it was at its zenith.

Under our feet it seemed like a little rock in the sky. To complicate matters, our short-wave transmitters had ceased to function, and we had to communicate with Hardy on Mars by magnesium flares, in the interplanetary dot-dash code.

We had repaired the gravity plate in record time, and were tuning up the atomotors when up from the ruddy planet had come an exposing and eclipsing sequence of light.

Flickerty — flash—flickerty—flash—flash "We—walk—alone."

Although we were close to Mars now, the the atomotors had built up a field drive which was giving me space nausea, and Joan a bad case of tension-itis.

She kept looking at me with her blue-gray eyes, disturbed, frightened, but yet trusting. I would never quite reconcile myself to the provisions of *Spaceway Personnel Amendment 6Y9.* Women were out of place on a Martian expedition no matter what the regulations said. Joan was the best chart room assistant a Commander ever had. But I still felt that the place for her was on Earth, surrounded by orchids and soft music, and not between Mars and Phobos in a ship that kept threatening to burst asunder.

In sudden desperation I strode to the intership communication coil and barked at the Chief Engineer: "Start decelerating, McCarthy. We've never built up such a speed as this. I—I don't like the *feel* of it."

"Aye, aye, sir," came from the Irish giant at the other end of the coil.

Decelerating before you've hit the heavyside is tough on the engine lads, but I knew McCarthy could handle it. The Chief Engineer could surmount almost any challenge flung at him out of thin air by a commander with a catch in his voice.

Almost before I could get the control board stripped for emergency action we were making a perfect seven point landing. Cushioned by bursts of energy from her flaming rocket jets the *Silver Queen* circled downward in a wide arc, and berthed herself by scooping a four hundred foot hollow in the sand.

TWENTY minutes later we were clambering through an airlock into the cold Martian dawn. Joan and I were the first to emerge, but by gripping a spanner bar the Chief Engineer managed to drop to the sand ahead of us; it was his voice which rang out on the frosty air.

"Sure, and they haven't moved her, sir. It's sealed she is—*from the outside!*"

Swaying a little, our breaths congealing on the frosty air, we stood staring up at the ghostily gleaming hull of Hardy's ship. The hoar frost which covered her from stem to stern hadn't begun to melt yet, and she looked more like a phantom ship than the sturdiest vessel ever built.

She rested in a deep hollow between

yellow-red hillocks of sand. A week before Hardy and I had stood on one of those high, tumbled mounds and discussed our divided command.

Hardy's voice seemed still to hover on the frosty air. "You may as well get Phobos out of your system, Jim. I could draw you a map of what you'll find there. Gray-blue soil and primitive rock structures, unweathered and dry. Bright, brittle stars—the Milky Way a burning spider web. But go ahead—get it out of your system."

With an effort I threw off the illusions of Hardy's presence, and straightened. What had happened to him? The ship was sealed and no sound broke the stillness. I was as frightened now as Joan had been when the magnesium flare had chilled her.

What had become of Hardy's scientific staff? What had become of the crew? Hardy had kept the assistant engineer and four able-bodied skymen. Where were they now? Had Hardy ordered the airlocks sealed and abandoned the ship deliberately? Good God, had he?

It seemed unlikely. Hardy was not a man of suicidal impulses. He knew how quickly the temperature could drop, knew there could be no security if he abandoned the ship and erected a vacuum tent out on the plain.

Even now the ghastly cold of the night before was waiting patiently to stage a comeback. The temperature was just below freezing, and there was a hazy blue tier of ice crystals obscuring the sun.

Joan was shivering and plucking at my sleeve. "I think we'd better separate, Jim," she urged. "We'll break out in mental symptoms if we just stand here, and take on the awful loneliness."

I had an impulse to draw her into my arms. But McCarthy was nodding, and there was a look on his big, rugged pan which said as plain as words: "We've got to find Hardy before a sand typhoon obliterates his trail. Sure, and the three of us can accomplish more by following the colleen's suggestion."

He had not the faintest idea of how I felt about Joan. Adjusting my oxygen mask I stared at him somberly.

"McCarthy," I said. "You'd better take the low road. Joan and I will take the high road. Every ten minutes or so, you will use your transmitter. It should be good for ten miles, if we don't get too much interference from the heavyside."

"The high road and the low road" was a standing joke between us. Hardy and I had noticed that the plain dipped directly behind his ship and rose in a gentle curve a short distance away. It wasn't much of a dip, and it wasn't much of a rise, but two searching parties walking in opposite directions could quickly pass from each other's sight. There wasn't much on Mars to hide a body, but the distances blurred more quickly than on Earth, and when the wind started blowing yellow-red sand about —well!

Unfortunately a compass with a needle that points is worthless on Mars. There is no magnetism at all on the ruddy planet; every five miles or so the needle of a compass reverses itself; you are better off if you don't know what magnetism is.

In fifteen or twenty minutes, Joan and I were out of sight of Hardy's ship, and had a message from McCarthy complaining that the temperature was dropping fast, and that he had found no trace of Hardy or his men.

IT IS wild and dismal on Mars, even when the sun shines down and melts the hoar frost. The vegetation is monotonously blue-green and poisonous looking, and I was glad it was covered now with a thin coating of hoar frost. Joan's brows were white, her hair ditto, and she kept stopping to slap herself and stare up at the sky.

"A snow maiden wondrous fair," I found myself thinking irrelevantly. There's something about the thin, cold atmosphere of Mar's which makes you retreat into yourself, and if you happen to have a companion like Joan you'll look out at her from an ivory tower if you're not careful.

I was thinking thoughts which

made me feel warm along my nerves, but all I said was: "Joan, how in blazes could Hardy stay out in this?"

"I don't know, darling," Joan breathed. "But if it's my *advice* you're asking—"

"Yes?"

"It might be better if we didn't stay out in it ourselves."

I nodded, and readjusted my oxygen mask. You *can* breathe the thin Martian air, but it is not pleasant to choke up, and feel half-suffocated.

"Darling, it's ashamed of my own weakness I am," Joan whispered, parroting McCarthy's inverted Gallic idiom.

"We're turning back," I said, with grim finality. I took a hitch in my gravity belt and turned my right foot in the direction of Hardy's ship. Then, with a glance at Joan which brought a quick flush to her cheeks, I raised my left heel and started to execute a complete about face.

Started only, for at that moment when my eyes were caressing Joan as though she were the last woman and the first forever and ever in my sight, I saw the stumbling figure.

He was coming down the high road fifty yards ahead of us. Not actually *on* the road, but stumbling along where it crinkled into a sort of shallow ditch before descending to the plain.

Joan uttered a smothered cry, and stood motionless.

"It's Andy Macleod!" I heard myself saying. For an instant the whole thing seemed so utterly unreal I wasn't sure I had spoken. My voice had a nightmare quality and seemed to come from deep inside my head, as though I'd been yielding to a vocal impulse in some fantastic dream which hadn't jelled yet.

The radiance which enveloped the stumbling figure's head and shoulders and streamed out behind him like a wind-wafted cloak was terrifying enough, but what made me fear I was going to be sick was the look of idiocy on his face. His tongue lolled and his eyes were rolled back, so that even from a distance of twenty yards they looked like white agates set in a jungle mask to scare away tribal ghosts.

But there were no tribal ghosts on Mars, and no mask-makers. He was very close to us now and still stumbling. Andy Macleod, Hardy's geologist. Only a week before I had thumped him on the back, and wished him luck with the red desert strata.

I almost screamed when he went lurching past me.

"Don't touch him!" Joan warned, a dark blur of terror in her eyes. "Jim, be careful!"

I had touched him. Lightly, on the wrist, for one awful second I returned Joan's stare as though we shared a secret too horrible to talk about. Worse, I seemed to be toppling backwards into an abyss away from her.

I shut my eyes and tried to think of nothing at all. When I opened them I was on firm ground again.

"The light must be an electrical phenomenon," Joan whispered hoarsely. "Did it burn you, darling?"

"No, it was as cold as his flesh," I said. "We've got to get him back to the ship!"

Joan shook her head. "No—don't you see? If it's a sleep-walking trance he's in he may lead us to the others!"

Her words sent a current of hope surging through me.

"Good Lord," I choked. "I never thought of that."

THE admission had been wrenched from me, but I was not ashamed of it. In grim emergencies most women are more logical than men, and Joan was an exceptional woman.

So quietly we moved you could have heard a pin dropping. Down the high road for eighty yards, and then recklessly out across the trackless waste in the wake of the stumbling Scotchman.

In some elusive, mysterious way we seemed en rapport with the aura of flickering radiance ahead, for when it dimmed a coldness seemed to tighten about our hearts.

"It seems to fluctuate with every breath we draw," Joan whispered. "I can't explain it exactly. But it's as

though it were something alive, and *had fastened on us!* That's the feeling I get, Jim. I'm not superstitious, but I—I—Jim, it isn't pleasant at all!"

I had been noticing it, too. Whenever Macleod faltered, the light bunched itself like a terrestrial measuring worm and waited for him to recover his equilibrium.

Suddenly the sky darkened, and Joan's fingers bit into my wrist. "Darling, we're going to have an eclipse," she warned.

"All right," I said. "Just watch your footing, and keep close to me. If that flame doesn't go out we'll have enough light to see by."

Keeping our distance, we continued on. A seeming eternity roared over us while Phobos spun across the sun, imprisoning us in a maze of hunched and quivering shadows. Many times a year Phobos darkened its primary, but never so startlingly as now. For when the eclipse dwindled, the light that came back flickered on a vast, stationary bulk toward which a flame-enveloped human figure was stumbling on an almost perpendicular plane.

The object which towered directly in our path was unmistakably a ship, but no such vessel had ever been built on Earth, or would be—or could be. A plastic song it was, a threnody of metal flaking into rust. Its symmetry was breathtaking, almost terrifying, and for an instant I was caught in such a tight web of awe that I felt like a man who has stumbled into a museum to gaze up at some priceless work of art, while the city in which he dwells is being relentlessly bombed.

The spectacle of a man stumbling upward through the empty air sent a chill coursing through me. But what drew my gaze with an even more compelling urgency were the ship's ponderous end-vanes, half-buried in the sand, and the sheer massiveness of the hull.

I REMEMBER thinking we could never climb up a nearly vertical hull four hundred feet in height. And I remember Joan shivering in my arms, tight and warm and clinging to me, and whispering that we could.

"The hull's corrugated, darling. We can't turn back now. You're worrying about me when you should be remembering Spaceway Regulation H 95. If Hardy was in trouble in an ice gleat on Neptune you'd get through to him if your hands dropped off."

Her mouth altered from a wet curve to a tight, thin line. "Stop ruffling my hair, darling, darling. We've got to see this through. You won't lose me if I don't slip—and I don't think I will."

Less clearly I remember the climb itself, with Death checking off the odds in millimeters every inch of the way. Although the hull was heavily corrugated even the most heat-resistant metal gets smelted down a little by the vicissitudes of space, and the odds seemed a hundred to one against our reaching the flyspeck mottling high on the hull through which Macleod had vanished, after dwindling to the dimensions of a gnat.

But reach it we did, to discover that it was a light-rimmed aperture a little larger than the *Silver Queen's* gravity ports.

"You go first, darling," Joan whispered.

I nodded, squeezed her hand, and rotated myself into the midst of the glow over what appeared to be a revolving handrail, but was probably a device for opening and closing the port. Looking down, all I could see was a nebulous glimmer. I might have twisted around more and taken a longer look, but my hands suddenly slipped and I did a hyperbola that brought the radiance swirling up about me.

I landed heavily on something soft that groaned and then grappled with me. A soft thud behind me told me that Joan had descended, but I did not swing about. The hands that tugged and clawed at me had no strength in them and the eyes that burned into mine were feverish with torment. It seemed as if it were not really I that was standing there, but someone whom I watched from a distance.

"Captain Hardy," I whispered. "*Captain Hardy.*"

He recognized me the instant I started shaking him. His lips began to move and his hand tightened convulsively on my wrist.

"Jim, get out of here!" he moaned. "Get out—get back to—the *Silver Queen.* Clamp—clamp down—the gravity ports. Jim, you hear? Jim? *Blast off!*"

"Hardy, listen to me," I husked. "We're not running out. We've come to—"

"No, *you* listen, Jim," he pleaded. "It's our fuel supply—our Uranium 235. If they get our uranium we'll never see it again. I've sealed up my ship, and now we mustn't talk mustn't even *think* about it."

His clawlike fingers tightened on my wrist. "Jim, they can move with the speed of light. That's why they leave the ports unguarded. Yesterday MacLeod tried to escape. He—he got as far as the ship. They didn't kill him, but when they brought him back—"

Hardy's voice sank to a hoarse whisper. "Second degree burns, Jim—on his chest, thighs and back. All I could do was puncture the blebs and assure him the agony wouldn't kill him."

"But you sealed up the ship," I said, huskily. "How did you get back to it?"

"I was with one of the flames, Jim—out on the plain," he replied. "But something happened to it. It swirled away from me and disappeared behind my ship. I sealed all the ports before it swirled back. Perhaps it was another flame that came for me. It's impossible to distinguish between them."

"But why do they—"

"Jim, they know we're keeping something from them. But it takes them a long time to get what we're thinking. They have to concentrate and we can block them by repeating nursery rhymes. Anything—any meaningless jingle."

HARDY'S face twitched. "Whatever you do, don't think about our fuel supply. They've never used U-235 as a fuel, but they've built up a crude and sketchy picture of our world, our science, from our random thoughts."

"You mean we've *two* chunks of U-235 to guard now," I asked.

Hardy nodded. "With all the strength of our minds. The *Silver Queen* isn't sealed, and they may get at the secret anyway. They are familiar with the phenomenon of radioactivity, and the release of atomic power by trigger-neutrons in water-jacketed U-235 would not be beyond their comprehension. We're short on rations now and in another month our supplies will be exhausted. If they steal our fuel we'll be done for. If they even suspect they can use uranium to produce the energies they need—"

He broke off abruptly and cringed back against the wall with a convulsive shudder.

The flames hovering at the end of the passageway were chillingly indeterminate in outline. Not formless, exactly, but the queer thing was that they seemed conical only when they remained completely stationary. The instant they swayed they seemed to fluctuate in thickness, losing their curvature and becoming almost two-dimensional.

Time seemed to stand still for an instant. I was aware of Hardy's harsh breathing and Joan's slim moist hand fumbling for mine in the dim cold light. More slowly I became aware of words forming in my mind, and running like quicksilver through the blurred mazes of my consciousness.

"Are you the *other* Captain?

"Are you the *other* Captain?

"From Phobos? From Phobos?"

Then: "We don't know a damned thing about machinery."

Somehow I knew that though they were communicating with me telepathically the words which formed in my mind only imperfectly described the images which accompanied them. I knew, for instance, that "machinery" was not a strictly accurate word, for it conjured up a vast complex of glowing cones and prisms.

"We don't know a thing about ma-

chinery. *Our* Captain expired—heart attack. Our food is exhausted and we are suffering from scurvy. We must—drain you."

Gradually it dawned on me that they were using my own mental concepts to describe a tragedy that had no exact parallel in human experience. Concepts which they had taken from Hardy's mind and the minds of his men and fitted together to form what Hardy had called "a crude and sketchy picture of our world."

THEY had lost the shining light which had guided them across the Intergalactic night. They had lost their "Captain." They did not know how to navigate the ship because they were "passengers." "Scurvy" was ludicrous, of course but it apparently meant they were suffering from an energy deficiency —nutritional to them. "Heart attack" suggested some sort of vital collapse. Perhaps an energy flareup had burnt their captain out.

They had used one word which I did not like. "Why should you wish to drain me?" I asked. "To drain me of what?"

Although Hardy had stressed that it took them a long time to get what we were thinking I wasn't prepared for the confusion which ensued.

"Of-of-of-of-of-what? Of—*what?* What, *what,* WHAT? Drain, *drain,* DRAIN? Repeat. Repeat the thought."

I complied slowly—three or four times.

"We wish you drain you of information, knowledge," came at last. "We need your help. With the machinery, the engines. The female—no, girl, GIRL, can help us with the engines."

Joan gave a little, choking gasp. She *had* studied engineering and knew a good deal about machinery. *Our* kind, of course. Seemingly the flames had tapped her mind, and—

The next thought came with terrifying suddenness. "We feast on radiant energies. Protoplasm—your bodies—mildly radioactive. We must drain you of warmth. We must—take you for a walk."

As the terrifying words came a whip seemed to catch me on the forward and tightened, so that I went reeling backward. The flames were swirling down the passageway toward me, but I scarcely saw them. My temples were pounding and my gaze was riveted on Joan's white face.

Even as I staggered back I had a torturing picture of her youth and beauty withering as the flames huddled close to her. She was looking at me as though I were a great, helpless stag whom someone had shot, her hands pressed to her throat.

I knew she wasn't thinking of herself at all. She was visualizing the Commander of the *Silver Queen* becoming a gaunt, hollow-eyed skeleton, and finally—slumping in sheer exhaustion as Macleod had done. MacLeod's stupor had been sufficiently deep to relax the lineaments of his face, and it seemed likely I would soon be wearing the same look of drooling idiocy.

There was no ladder leading to the port above, but directly behind me was a yawning, dark opening in the deck. Where it led I neither knew nor cared. My one thought was to spare Joan the agony of being dragged over the plain, and down into the "engine room" to labor in torment over the maze of glowing cones and prisms I had seen as though in a glass darkly.

As I swung about a look passed between us which needed no interpreting. Swiftly, steadily, I gathered her in my arms. The warmth of her body was good to feel. It steadied me somehow. Her cheeks were cool against mine and there was no longer any panic in my heart when I leapt.

Falling through darkness I remembered thinking that they couldn't take us for a walk now. Couldn't, couldn't—

"DARLING—" a voice moaned. I reached out and felt around me. An acrid odor assailed my nostrils, and there was a buzzing in my ears which grew steadily in volume.

I was stretched out on a cold, hard surface, my limbs twisted painfully under me, my chest constricted by a dislodged gravity belt. Groaning, I pushed the belt down to my waist, and arose to a sitting position. As I did so memory came rushing back with a roar as of great wings unfolding.

I saw again the yawning aperture in the deck above, and the hovering flames and Joan's white face. And again I seemed to be falling through darkness with my darling in my arms.

It was an illusion, of course, produced by a swirl of returning memories following too closely on a jarring shock. All about me towered cyclopean cones and prisms suffused with a pale blue radiance. As I stared into the unearthly glow a dizziness swept over me. I shut my eyes and opened them again slowly.

Joan was lying a few feet away, separated from me by a triangular cluster of glowing prisms. She was moaning and trying to rise. Suddenly she seemed to sense my gaze. Her lips trembled and her eyes met mine.

"Dearest, help me—"

Swaying, I stood up and started toward her. Started only, for there was something wrong with my feet. When I tried to move them I seemed to stumble over them. My knees buckled, and the deck began to move out from under me. With a shattering crash I sprawled forward, striking three of the prisms and sending a livid spurt of light lancing upward.

Instantly other lights flashed and pinwheeled all about me. There was a heavy roar and then—utter, unnatural silence. Then movement again, a sensation of rocketing motion. More lights flashed, spurted, and the droning which ensued muted the roar of the "engines."

Something seemed to spin me about, and I had a sensation of yawning emptiness, of gulfs upon gulfs dropping away beneath me. I groaned, and tried to pull myself back up over the shattered prisms.

I pulled myself back, but it wasn't over prisms. It was over a mound of tumbled red sand, with the dust of a beginning desert typhoon rattling against my oxygen mask and a scream echoing in my ears.

"God, Jim, we're *outside!*"

Hardy was half-buried in the sand, but his mouth was clear and one leg and the arm with which he was gesticulating. Macleod was right above me, but he couldn't speak at all. His mouth was choked with sand, and he was groping for his oxygen mask and taking a terrific lashing from the rising storm.

Hardy's scientific staff were pretty well scattered. Meade and Miles a hundred feet apart, and Jackson at the apex of what was practically a triangle. In the space between Joan had fallen to her knees and was still trying to rise. Together in a hollow, their faces purple-blue, were able-bodied spacemen Phillips, Grayson, Gerick, and Stanley.

"Jim, lad, it's outside we are!"

I crawled toward Joan on my hands and knees. She was deathly pale and would be needing strong arms about her.

"Darling," I husked, lifting her to her feet. "Are you all right? Are you—"

"Don't be silly," she said, wrinkling her nose at me. "I never felt better in all my life. I never—"

She swayed and—went limp in my arms.

THE wonder of it widened our eyes all the way *home*. Widened our eyes and diverted our minds from navigation as we blasted our way across the void, Hardy in his ship and I in mine, with McCarthy and Joan horning in, talking, arguing about it in the audiovisidisk till the blue-green Earth filled a third of the sky above us.

"Sure, Captain," McCarthy said. "From what you tell me, it wasn't uranium they needed for that ship at least. It was a space-time traveller, and where it came from we'll not be knowing."

"I guess you're right, Mac," I said. "When I smashed those prisms things started humming. The machinery must have built up tremendous vibrations which warped space.

The continuum buckled, and that ship was sucked back into space-time in the direction of motion. It was probably a Fitzgerald contraction traveler."

"You mean the dimension warp ripped away most of its mass, and not being yourselves in motion we were spilled out through the infra-radiant bulkheads?" Joan asked.

"Exactly."

"But the flames were not spilled out, Jim."

"I imagine the flames vibrated with the ship," I said. "You can't travel through space-time unless you vibrate with the traveling vehicle. People who don't think things through are apt to overlook that angle."

"Sure and it's nothing but luck I'm wishing them," McCarthy said. "In their shoes we'd have done the same."

"They wore spiked-shoes, Mac," I grunted. "But this I'll say for them. We'll not be seeing their likes again. We *thought* it was a magnesium flare which brought us back from Phobos—"

"I sent no flare," Hardy's image said in the Silver Queen's audiovisi-screen.

"You and your nursery rhymes," I gibed. "To keep from thinking of our fuel supply you hummed nursery rhymes, eh?"

"I guess, I fell to brooding," Hardy admitted. "Instead of 'Mary had a little lamb' I kept repeating despairfully a line from the poet Blake: 'We walk alone.' It still kept me from thinking about uranium."

"It didn't keep you from thinking about the message you wanted to send," I said. "You kept thinking over and over, 'I'd like to send a message to Phobos to warn Jim.' Over and over until, suddenly, that flame caught on.

"There was 'another captain' on Phobos who might know more about flame nutrition and how to navigate a space-time traveler with cones and prisms for engines than Captain Hardy. It had picked up the dot-dash code from your random thoughts and since you kept repeating: 'We walk alone' it assumed that those three words, sent across space, would bring the other captain back to Mars.

"So, not being human and all wrapped up in self it went out on the plain, alone, and burnt itself out in convulsive flares.

"Flickerty-flash — flickerty — flash — flash — flash — "We walk alone."

"Sure," McCarthy grunted. "It's but taking the high road you are to say what you've plainly been thinking. It's a starry Victoria Cross that flame should be wearing, Jim, lad—eh, I mean, Captain."

THE END

WE KNEW IT ALL THE TIME

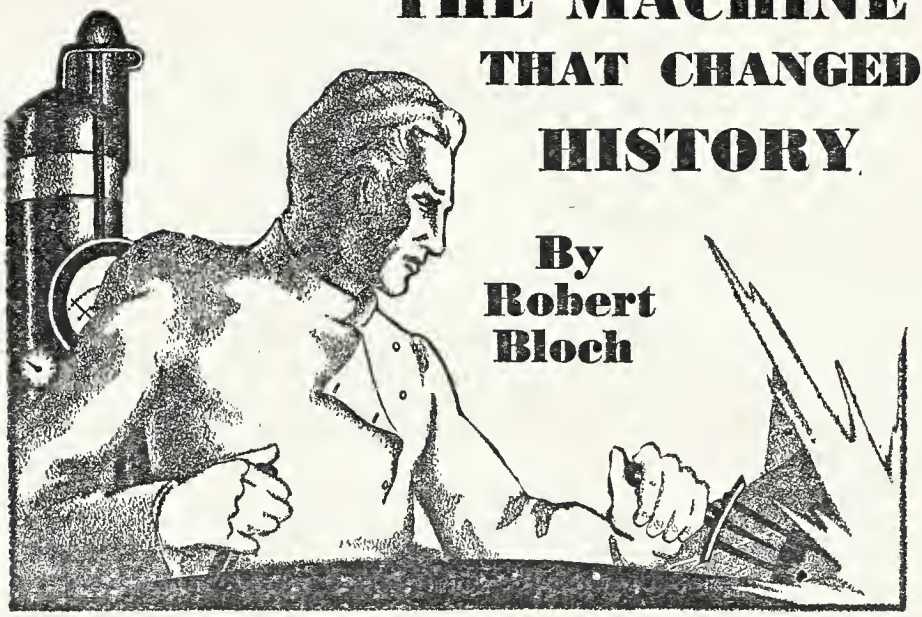
Science fictionists weren't at all surprised, early this year, when the discovery of a planet, revolving around a sun outside the Solar System was announced. Having explored the entire cosmos, science-fiction writers, and readers merely lifted an eyebrow and murmured: "It's about time."

The planet in question rotates around the sun 61 Cygni and is estimated to be to that star as Jupiter is to our own sun, according to a dispatch published in the *New York Times* some weeks back. Discoverer was one Dr. K. Aa. Strand.

The interesting feature about this discovery, however, is the name selected for the planet. It seems that the Roman and Greek pantheon has been pretty well used up in naming celestial bodies. And this particular planet deserved something better than the cognomen of some obscure demigod. So Dr. Strand did the sensible thing; he went to the Egyptian pantheon, which hasn't been used at all so far, for this purpose, and dubbed the brand new world *Osiris*.

We wonder who the first fictional hero to land upon *Osiris* will be, and if he'll discover a world peopled with beings similar to the Egyptian god-creatures. As you'll recall, they were rather fascinating entities!

THE MACHINE THAT CHANGED HISTORY



By Robert Bloch

The time-machine had been tested and approved by the best scientists and physicists in the Reich; Geopolitik had mapped out plans for its use. But Hitler had his own personal ideas on how this machine could change history — and in a sense, he was right; it did change history!

"VICTORY!"

The word had resounded through the halls of Berchtesgaden before. But this time they carried a new meaning, for they came from the lips of Adolf Hitler.

The sallow little man standing before him in the private apartment smiled humbly.

"I am pleased and honored that the Fuehrer approves of my work," he whispered, huskily. "If the Fuehrer desires, I can explain the principles on which my time-chamber operates."

Hitler's hand rose to command silence.

"Your theories? My dear Schultz, your theories do not matter. Your time-machine has been inspected, tested, and approved by the most eminent physicists and scientists in the Reich. We of the Reich are thorough. If your claims were not founded in truth, you would not now be my guest in Berchtesgaden."

Adolf Hitler rose, leaned forward. "Ah, no, I do not concern myself with your theories of invention. It is enough that you have achieved the seemingly impossible. You have constructed a working model of a machine capable of transporting men or objects through time itself."

"Yes—"

Hitler's frown cut off the sallow inventor's reply.

"It means victory, do you understand? Victory!"

He advanced across the room to the vast, gleaming silver shell which rested weirdly in the center. His fingers rose to press against the metal surface.

"We of the Reich move swiftly, Schultz," he whispered. "Already the Geopolitik has prepared for me a complete documentary survey of

the potentialities inherent in this remarkable invention. It shall be of invaluable assistance to us in the days to come."

Schultz smiled.

"I too have dreamed," he murmured. "We could build many hundreds of these and with them move forward or backwards in time as we willed. We could attack—"

Hitler shook his head.

"The expense is too great. Besides, I have other plans. Plans I mean to execute swiftly. Which reminds me. You have the documents concerning this invention of yours?"

Schultz nervously proffered his briefcase.

"The method of operation is simple. A child could master the controls. Mathematical calculations are almost unnecessary, due to the principles of spatial inhibition embodied in the construction."

"In other words, it is all here in this briefcase—all that is essential to the building and operation of the time-chambers?"

"That is correct."

Hitler smiled.

"Then, Herr Schultz, our little interview is at an end."

His hand went to a buzzer.

The blackshirted man entered quietly. He took Schultz by the arm and ushered him out.

"Heil Hitler!"

Hitler nodded. "Germany will not forget your contribution, Schultz," he said.

THE door closed. Hitler sat alone in the room, staring at the briefcase, then at the silver chamber of the time-traveller.

He pressed a buzzer on the intercommunications system.

"Kellzer? Bauer has taken Schultz. He has his orders. Dispose of the body quickly. Notify his relatives of the accident as planned."

He released his finger. Again Hitler sat back, his stare intensified. Again he sounded the buzzer.

"Kellzer? Send Eglitz to me at once. Eglitz. Gestapo staff. The linguist."

Within a space of a few minutes, young Karl Eglitz clicked his heels smartly before the Fuehrer's desk.

"Heil Hitler."

"Eglitz—you have heard of what has been going on?"

"The Fuehrer refers to this Schultz person and his invention?"

"Yes."

"I assisted in drawing up the report on it."

"Good. Then you understand. Eglitz—do you think you could *operate* this machine?"

"I do."

"Eglitz—do you speak French?"

"The Fuehrer must know that I have lived in France."

"So." Hitler was silent for a moment. "Eglitz—I have heard good reports of your character and ability. You are a reliable man." He paused. "I have a mission for such a man."

"I am honored."

"It is a mission of the utmost importance, and as such it is extremely confidential. No one will know of it but the two of us."

"The Fuehrer forgets that the Geopolitik knows of the uses to which the machine will be put."

"Wrong, Eglitz. This is a mission of my own—one that the Geopolitik never dreamed of. Eglitz, I have conceived of a use for this time-chamber which will stagger humanity. And you shall carry it out!

"It is a mission that will win the war—win the world! It embodies an idea so stunning in its impact that even I, whose inspiration conceived it, am humbled before it."

"The Fuehrer can trust me."

"Then listen, Eglitz. Listen to the mission I have planned for you. Listen intently."

Hitler whispered. Eglitz listened. His mechanical smile never left his face, but as the Fuehrer continued, a little gasp rose involuntarily from his throat. Beads of moisture appeared upon his forehead. His hands clenched. And still Hitler whispered on.

"So. That is your mission, Eglitz. Do you think you can carry it out?"

The Gestapo man's voice quavered. "I—might," he managed. "It will take several days of preparation. Re-

search. I must find out when he was in Cologne. We must take the machine there, too. I must study documents pertaining to his daily routine, pick a time."

"The resources of the Reich are yours to command," Hitler answered. "You must not fail. If you succeed, we shall triumph beyond our wildest dreams."

"I shall prepare." Eglitz backed towards the door.

"Heil Hitler."

Hitler sat alone once more, smiling still. Suddenly he rose and walked to a corner ledge.

A little bronze bust rested there —the head of a stout man with piercing eyes; a man whose hanging forelock rested on a majestic brow.

Hitler stared at the bronze head and his smile widened.

"They say you were master of Destiny, too," he whispered. "But I wonder if you ever dreamed of an enterprise as great as this? An enterprise defying space and time? You crossed the Alps—but I cross centuries. Napoleon, the world will soon learn you have a master!"

The time-chamber, the bronze bust, and the ruler of Germany stood motionless in the twilight while Destiny wove a web to enshroud them all.

THE smile had not faded from Adolf Hitler's face before the wavering outlines of the metal chamber disappeared from sight. The room in Hitler's Cologne headquarters still pulsed with the humming vibrations of the time-chamber. Eglitz had entered it and disappeared. And now the chamber had disappeared.

For a moment there was nothingness. Then slowly the blurring contours of the silver machine materialized, looming irrationally out of the air in the way a slide specimen emerges from a blank microscopic field. The humming vibration increased as the chamber solidified.

Then came silence.

Hitler strode forward abruptly.

"Something has gone wrong," he rasped. "A mistake—"

The compartment door opened slowly in the silver side. The tall figure of Eglitz emerged stooping through the doorway. Eglitz drew himself erect in formal salute.

"Heil Hitler."

Adolf Hitler stared in astonishment. Eglitz had changed. His usual uniform was gone. Instead he wore a gaudy scarlet coat with green pipings, and his braided yellow trousers were tucked into shiny black boots. A sword dangled from an elaborate scabbard fastened about his waist by a white sash. In one hand he carried a bushy black busby with a green cockade. Moreover, his usual smooth-shaven countenance had disappeared under an imposing false mustache which quite dwarfed Hitler's own.

"Eglitz—back so soon?"

"Surely the Fuehrer realizes I have been absent a week?"

"A week? Are you raving, imbecile? You have been gone less than ten seconds."

"Time—a week to me, ten seconds to the Fuehrer. It is relative, as Einstein has it—"

"Do not mention that person's name," Hitler scowled. Then, "Speak up, man! What of your mission? Did you get there? Was he there? *Did you bring him?*" Hitler's voice quivered with frantic impatience.

"I am pleased to report to the Fuehrer that, according to instructions, I arrived at the Imperial Palace at Cologne on July sixth, 1807, at 9:15 p. m. In keeping with my orders, I assumed the disguise of military attache of the Grand Army—"

"*Where is he?*"

Hitler's voice was a knife.

"I am here."

THE low tones came from the throat of the man in the doorway of the time-chamber.

Hitler stared.

The short, stocky figure descended. Hitler stared into the swarthy, fleshy face, stared at the majestic brow and the hanging forelock, stared into the deep-set, burning eyes of

"Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of the French!"

He whispered the words.

The little man inclined his head.

"Indeed, sire. And you are—"

"Reichsfuehrer Adolf Hitler."

Two hands clasped. A fat, pudgy hand, and a lean, limp one. Two hands clasped—hands that had held the earth and crushed it, each in their time. Two hands clasped across the centuries. The hands of Napoleon and Hitler. Hands that wrote history.

Eglitz stood there, gaping.

Hitler turned.

"Eglitz—I'd forgotten about you. You may go now. You deserve a rest after your journey to secure our distinguished guest."

"The Fuehrer is kind. I assure the Fuehrer that my task was not easy. This Fouche, the Emperor's Chief of Police, has a system equal to our own Gestapo. In order to—ah—abduct the Emperor—"

"I've no time for that now, Eglitz. You may go. Germany will not forget your contribution, Eglitz."

"Heil Hitler."

Eglitz left.

Hitler's hand went to a buzzer.

"Kellzer? Eglitz has just left my apartment. Send two troopers and place him under arrest. No, not the camp. Treason trial. He must be disposed of within the hour. That is all."

Hitler turned again to face his visitor.

"So," he breathed. "You are here."

Of the two, Napoleon was more at ease.

"So I observe."

"You are calm."

"Resigned, let us say."

"This must be a strange experience for you."

"I am accustomed to the unusual. Besides, your aide—this Eglitz, is it not?—told me much on the voyage. Despite the fact that he knocked me over the head; virtually kidnapped me as it were, I bear him no ill will. He seemed both friendly and intelligent."

"He was—is," Hitler agreed.

"He told me much of interest. This is 1942, is it not? So much seems to have happened. Naturally, I am still a bit confused as to the reasons for all this."

"Allow me to explain," Hitler urged.

Napoleon smiled.

"Very well. Your french, sire, is somewhat—rusty."

"Perhaps. But I could not risk an interpreter for what I am going to tell you. Please be seated."

EMPEROR and Dictator, seated at a table in the quiet room. Emperor, Dictator, and the time-chamber. Bridge between two worlds of war. The room that had hummed to the vibrations of a machine which defied space and time now held the whisper of voices whose echos had shaken continents.

"And so you see, that is why I brought you here." Hitler was hoarse from his hour-long monologue. "I am the master of my world. You were the master of yours. Together we can exercise twice the power."

Napoleon nodded.

"Besides," Hitler murmured, "I need you. I would admit that to no living man. But I need your knowledge of military science—and the inspired genius behind it. I have made—mistakes. Mistakes which must be rectified."

Again the voice droned on, as darkness deepened. From time to time the two men rose and consulted maps, charts, documentary material which was brought from the other rooms.

It was nearly midnight when the two weary men faced one another across the long table.

"But there must be some solution," Hitler sighed.

"Your military position is perilous," Napoleon answered. "What is worse, that position is irrevocable. It cannot be changed." Imperial shoulders shrugged. "It was useless for you to send for me. I had best go back to my own day and place. I tell you frankly—your offer of joint partnership in this war is enticing, but it leads only to a hopeless end."

"You must help me," Hitler grated. "You must! You are Napoleon!"

"Yes. I am Napoleon. But I cannot change what exists," answered the Little Corporal, sadly.

Then his head jerked up.

"Wait. There is our solution!"

A pudgy finger stabbed towards the time-chamber.

"What do you mean? Are you mad?"

"No madder than you, Sire, when you sent your aide to kidnap me through time. My solution is simple. Attend.

"As we have seen, your difficulties began at the outset of this war. In September, 1939. You missed the opportunity to invade England. You did not check Russia. You failed in your mission in the United States."

"But that is past—over two years ago. It is too late to change."

"Is it? Why can't we enter the time-chamber and return to 1939? Return to July of that year and plan the war anew for September?"

Hitler was on his feet.

"Could we—dare we—?"

"You want the world? Very well, we can obtain it. If you have the courage to make the journey. Once in 1939 we can rectify your previous errors, anticipate the others. Profit by experience. The war will be waged properly then, with you and me in command."

Blurred voices in a midnight room. Blurred figures moving towards the silver machine. A nightmare vision in a nightmare world. Napoleon, Hitler, and a time-machine.

And then—only an empty room, after all. The machine was gone. Somewhere in the reaches of infinity, two dictators sped back to remould the past. The earth trembled in anticipation.

IT was Napoleon who handled the controls. The pudgy fingers of Bonaparte, ex-lieutenant of artillery, mastered the intricacies of the machine's working parts.

His interest in the principles of operating the chamber had almost exceeded his curiosity regarding the operations of the war itself. But Hitler had been patient. After all, a visitor so distinguished must be humored. And if Napoleon chose to guide the time-chamber, it was well. He, Hitler, had chosen to guide the destinies of the world instead.

So they sat there, in the curiously vibrating metal shell. Napoleon's hands moved over the silver surface of the panels in silent concentration. Hitler's hands twisted nervously in his lap.

There was silence, save for the humming vibration—the silence of two men moving through the unknown, the unnameable; twisting through time on a mission to remould the fate of the world.

Just two men—but two men unlike any of the myriad billions who had preceded them on the face of earth. Two men, each of whom in his time had remoulded the face of the earth; remoulded it with ruthless surgery that left it torn and bleeding.

Never two such men before, and never such a journey....

Something of the import must have occurred to them both as they sat there waiting for the vibrations to cease. For they glanced at one another suddenly, and their eyes met.

The eyes of Hitler met the eyes of Napoleon, somewhere within the emptiness of space and time. Met and mingled in a flaming resolve. It was the Fuehrer who addressed the Emperor.

"In just a moment," he whispered, "we shall arrive. And the work will begin. It was meant to be. You and I—our greatness is such that Fate itself has willed our union. Your sun and my star shall rise together in the heavens."

It was the voice of the mystic that rose above the humming; the voice of megalomania triumphant.

"Perhaps?" Bonaparte echoed. His dark eyes were filmed with sudden wonderment. "And yet I wonder if man can cheat his Fate?"

"I am Fate." The harsh voice of the Fuehrer rose. "As you shall see." His hand rose, extended. "Master of the world, and now master of time and space itself! We have gone far since your day, Napoleon. Your armies would be blasted to bits by

a single *panzer* division. But you've seen that. You know how death can leap from the skies, or hurtle through the air from a hundred miles away. You know how death creeps on, above, and under the seas. You know how entire continents may be ravished by the flaming breath of war."

Napoleon smiled. "I too have made speeches," he declared, sardonically. "But perhaps I have learned to regret some of the deeds accompanying them."

"I do not regret and I shall not regret," Hitler retorted. "We are returning to 1939. This time there shall be no errors. England shall be invaded swiftly. And France shall—"

He checked himself in time. A frown had appeared on the Little Corporal's forehead. Did the fool suspect? No. How could he? He did not know what had happened to France. He had been taken from Germany in 1807 to Germany in 1942. He didn't know—but Hitler worried about the frown.

"And France?" Napoleon echoed softly. "What of France?"

"France shall share its rightful place with Germany," Hitler amended, hastily.

THE frown disappeared. In its place came a slow smile. For some reason Hitler didn't like the smile any better.

"That is well," answered the Emperor. "France shall hold its rightful place, yes."

Hitler was silent. His thoughts raced swiftly. In a moment they would arrive—arrive in 1939. It would be late summer again. He and Napoleon would enter into council. The war would be plotted afresh; with Hitler's memories of two years to come as an aid. Napoleon would be helpful with strategy, extremely helpful. His unbiased viewpoint would aid in pointing out various weaknesses even Hitler and his staff might overlook.

And then, the war. Hitler's war.

For he had decided finally. When Napoleon's work was over, he must go. Hitler didn't trust his frown or his smile. The fool would never stand for what would happen to France. He'd be disposed of—this self-styled Emperor.

Hitler's dream of triumph glittered in his eyes. What a final irony! Men had always compared him to Napoleon. Thought it a compliment when they termed him an equal. Well, Hitler would be superior to the French conqueror. His greatest victory.

"Wait! Do you feel that?"

Napoleon's voice cut through Hitler's meditations.

"I think we've arrived."

Yes. The vibrations were diminishing. The humming and droning within the metal chamber slackened. In a moment there was a curious little bump—not a physically-felt bump, but a sort of shifting and settling sensation in the consciousness of both men. As though they had been spinning in a void and suddenly set down on something solid.

"Yes—we're here!"

Napoleon rose. His pompous little body moved towards the compartment door. Hitler followed. Now his smile was broad. Napoleon couldn't see him. Instead he led the way—led the way to Hitler's triumph and his own doom.

The door swung open as the Emperor's fingers moved over the bolts and handles. Napoleon stood on the threshold, breathed deeply. Then he clambered out.

Hitler moved forward swiftly. He could hardly wait. To emerge again on the eve of victory—

Hitler stepped out.

Into the arms of two waiting guards.

"Hold this man!"

Napoleon's voice barked the order.

Hitler struggled in the grip of giant hands.

"What is this? Why—"

He stared upwards into the mustached visages of two Grenadiers. They were huge shakos and gaudy green uniforms. The uniforms of Napoleon's troops!

Hitler's eyes roved wildly about the great chamber in which the ma-

chine rested. It was a court apartment—luxuriantly appointed in the styles of Napoleon's day.

And standing before him, no longer an incongruous figure, but with the air of a master in his own time and place, was Napoleon.

Again Hitler saw the smile on the lips of the Emperor.

HITLER heard his voice through a swirling mist.

"We are here, Adolf Hitler—but in a time and place of my own choosing. The hour has arrived—but it is the hour of my destiny, not yours!

"We have returned to the day on which you abducted me. We are in Cologne, in my German palace, in 1807."

"But—"

Again Hitler saw the smile and shuddered. Napoleon advanced and whispered.

"You fool! Did you believe I would forsake my own destiny for yours? I handled the controls—and I set them for this day again. I want to live my own life, complete the mission of conquest on which I embarked. So I have returned to my own time."

Hitler's head whirled. He temporized swiftly.

"But you and I—we could have ruled a greater world together—I offered you everything—"

"Adolf Hitler, I do not want your kind of world." The Emperor's voice rose to a knell of doom. "Your aide, the man who brought me to you, was careless. He let hints slip on the journey through time. He told me *what you did to my France.*"

"France?"

"Did you think I was fooled? No, I knew all along. You and your hordes trampled over my land, ravaged it. And I swore to avenge my country. I shall do so, in my own way.

"Hitler, I am a warrior, a conqueror. But I am not a mad butcher! And I do not intend to unleash you once again upon my people.

"You and your crazy theories of racial superiority—of men who must kill like beasts in order to live! I am going to save France and the world from you."

Hitler wet his cracked lips. "What are you going to do?" he whispered.

Napoleon gestured curtly.

"Guards—place this man back in the machine."

The Grenadiers dragged the Fuehrer across the floor. His face was ashen. His voice rose to entreaty. "What are you going to do?"

Napoleon shrugged.

"There is no place here in my world for your kind. There is no place in the world to come—1939 or 1942, or any year. There never will be a place again for men with your debased dreams!

"In all the ages, I know of only one time when the world would welcome your vile ideas. There you must go, to a world where the weak perish and only the strong survive. And I wish you joy!"

They were inside the chamber now. Napoleon's hands were moving over the controls. A tinkling sound splintered the silence.

"What was that?"

Napoleon turned.

"I have smashed the adjustment dials," he announced. "You are embarked on a one-way journey."

The guards backed out of the compartment. Napoleon followed. He stood in the metal doorway before closing the door.

"Goodbye, Adolf Hitler," he murmured. "You are going to seek your rightful destiny at last."

Hitler rose with a snarl, lunged forward.

But the iron door of the time-chamber clanged hollowly in his face. And a humming rose to mingle with Hitler's anguished scream.

THE humming rose and rose. It filled Hitler's head, throbbed through it. It was a dark drone, filling his brain with the black muttering of doom.

Hitler lay in the darkness while fear pulsed through his being. Lay there for endless eons, lay there for an eternity—as he sped through eons and eternity alike.

But when the humming finally

subsided, he had conquered his dread.

He sat up sharply when he felt the curious *adjustment* sensation which meant the time-chamber had arrived. Hitler drew a deep breath.

He was here.

Napoleon had done it. The controls were beyond repair. He was here, and he'd face the future unafraid.

Napoleon had outwitted him, yes. But no use crying over spilt milk. The Emperor was crafty—but a fool, for all that! He was back again in 1807, strutting across the stage of history, playing the tyrant—but Hitler knew what Napoleon did not know. Knew that there was a Waterloo lying ahead for the Emperor in eight short years. What sweet revenge! That long exile ahead!

And he, Hitler, had been exiled. But he could still mould his future freshly, in whatever time he found himself.

Hitler smiled grimly. Yes. Napoleon forgot that he, Adolf Hitler, could shape his own destiny. Hadn't he risen from humble house-painter to mighty warlord in the complexity of the modern world? Well, with his brain and vision, his knowledge of men and the future, he could start again.

He wondered where Napoleon had sent him.

"Where the weak perish and only the strong survive." That might be ancient Rome. Barbarian times. Well, that was hardly a sad fate. He'd learn. He'd make adjustments. He knew men and he knew History. Wherever it was, Adolf Hitler could always rule in a world where strength ruled over weakness.

He rose, stepped to the chamber. He unbolted it slowly, pushed it open. He drew another deep breath. The fresh air was sweet and clean.

Smiling, Adolf Hitler stepped out onto a grassy sward. His eyes blinked in the sunlight.

He stood on a hillside which rose like a grassy island amidst a sea of lush vegetation. Why, it was like a tropical forest!

Blinking again, he walked across the turf. The ground was soft, almost steaming with moisture beneath his feet.

Where was he? In what time did he exist? Where were the cities of Germany, the people?

Hitler shook his head. His vision cleared.

Then he saw them emerge from the forest at his right. They came swiftly. He wheeled in panic.

Too late! The others were creeping up on him from the rear, cutting off his return to the door of the time-chamber.

Adolf Hitler stood surrounded by a ring—a ring of advancing figures. He stared at the figures and understood Napoleon's parting words at last.

He stared at a band of ape-like shamblers—shamblers that had only the faces of men. Their shaggy bodies were covered with long, yellowish fur. Blonde fur. They were powerful, grinning in their strength. And their deep, chuckling laughter was filled with hatred—the hatred of the strong for the weak.

Strong. Blonde. Brutes living in a time where he could find his rightful destiny—

As the monsters closed in on him, Adolf Hitler's screams rose from the little forest hillside in the Stone Age.

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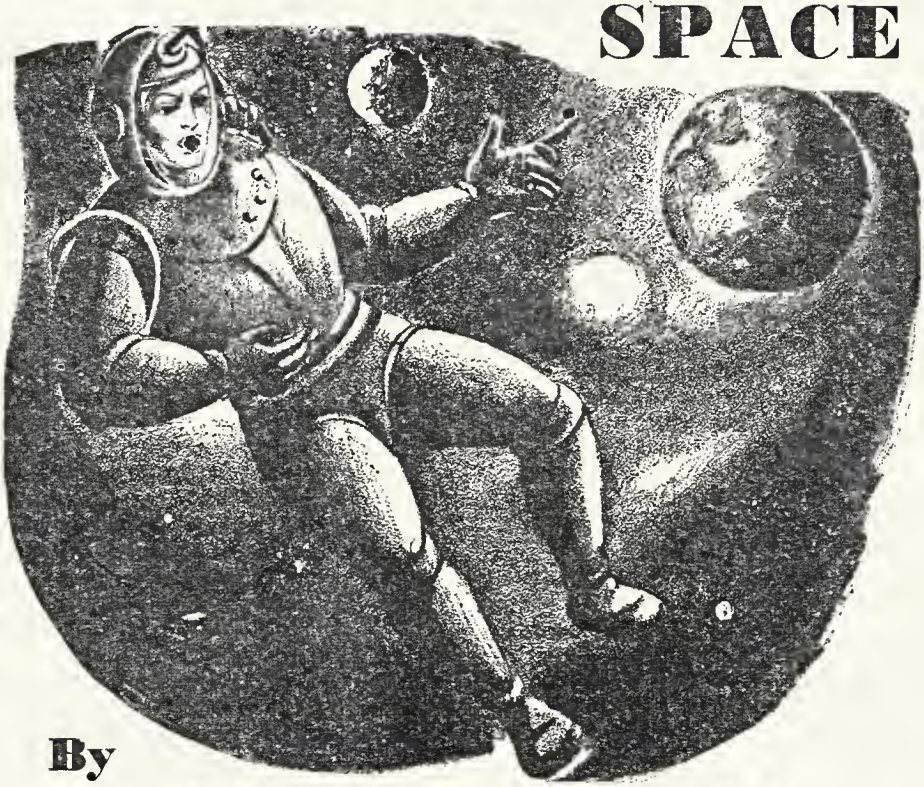

By

GRATH WALDEYER

Everything about John Smith was strange except his name. But even Smith did not suspect the astounding truth about himself and his origin, until the weird messenger came out of space to answer the riddle of the ages!

PROFESSOR JOHN SMITH turned from the vision piece of the huge electro-telescope, stared fixedly at the girl waiting with the pencil poised over her notebook.

The eyes of the young Director of Bosworth Observatory were steel-gray, the irises drilling points from which radiated tiny flecks of chipped steel, inlaid in the gray obsidian of cornea. The full fixity of their gaze seemed to hold people in an unbreakable mental grip, filled them with a strange unease. John Smith had learned to see from the corners of his eyes, or to flick them swiftly across the features of others, so as to spare them the strange force of the

mentality that blazed from those living windows.

But that didn't apply to the creature who now registered on the supersensitive retinas—a raven-haired, full-lipped specimen of feminity whose flashing black eyes gazed boldly into John Smith's without flinching. She didn't mind being locked in that strange mental grip. She was his wife and Observatory assistant.

John Smith nodded silently and turned back to the vision piece of the telescope. Now his eyes changed subtly in color, color that admitted wavelengths of light that did not register on ordinary retinas. He dictated in a low, vibrant voice that seemed to belong with such eyes. . .

The pencil in the girl's hand flew swiftly over the pad. *"The object is speeding earthward,"* it wrote, *"between the orbits of Mars and Earth. It is tiny, faint, and not perceptible to ordinary eyesight."*

Ordinary eyesight! Astronomers who studied that report would know what it meant; that Professor John Smith's supersensitive retinas could discern celestial objects invisible to normal vision. Objects emitting light so faint it took hours to pile up an image on photograph plates.

Eye experts had been dumbfounded in testing John Smith's eyes, particularly when he had detected the faint blur of a bullet leaving a gun barrel. "Superfast perception reactions," they had mumbled pompously, to hide their befuddlement. A few years ago, visiting an observatory, Smith had seen Halley's Comet returning in its predicted path, weeks before it could be detected by others. He had immediately been offered a position in Bosworth Observatory, housing the world's largest telescope, and had risen rapidly to the Directorship.

Yes, everything about John Smith was strange—everything but his name.

"The object," his low vibrant voice went on, "was discovered yesterday. If it follows its present path it should pass very close to earth within two days. . ." His voice trailed off. Black-haired Leona Smith glanced at her husband questioningly, pencil poised. He was peering intently into the eyepiece, his expression strained.

"What now, Professor?" she said banteringly. "Was it just a ghost-image after all?"

His strong, sensitive features did not relax. His faintly curved lips barely moved as he spoke. "It is an artificial object—a spaceship!"

The weight of the discovery threw a mantle of awed silence about them both. Was a new chapter in Earth's history to be written? Was there to be, for the first time, a visitant from another world?

Then Leona sprang to the eyepiece, peered in. She rose presently, shaking her black tresses. "I can't see a thing. It's still too faint."

Smith passed a strong lean hand over his broad forehead. "You are normal," he muttered huskily. "I'm cross-circuited in some way. My strange eyesight, the uneasiness I cause in people. Why?"

IT WAS a complete mystery to him. He had known a normal childhood in an orphanage, a normal life. Normal, except for that strange sensation, at intervals, of being under surveillance. With maturity, this phenomenon had become rarer.

Leona gazed at him fondly for a moment, then broke the silence. "You go on the air in five minutes," she reminded him practically. "Your chats about the stars program, you know. People don't seem to fear your television image!"

John Smith waved aside the prepared script she thrust toward him. "My mind is too full of the strange spaceship approaching earth. I'll talk about that. Oh, I know the Observatory trustees will consider it sensationalism. Nonetheless, I'll risk it. People should be interested."

He stepped before the television apparatus set up in the Observatory for his convenience. He delighted in these broadcasts, for they took him into millions of homes, made him feel he was partaking of normal, everyday life like other people. His vibrant, hypnotic voice went out on the night air to entrance millions.

When he had said "good night"

twenty minutes later, the girl had his street clothes ready. Their working schedule—also their appetites—called for a light supper at this time each night, for which they descended to lower-level.

Smith paused for a word with Carter, the second Observatory assistant. "Since you can not yet see the object, I will relocate it upon my return, if it has passed out of the field of view by that time." A moment later the young couple were stepping out of the towering observatory structure at the lower-level traffic-way.

In 1998 the only direction astronomical observatories could go to escape civilization was *up*. To describe it exactly, the cities were all in the country. The vibration-proof structure of the Bosworth Observatory towered far above the polarized lighting of the lower levels at which moved the mass of humanity. Smith steeled himself instinctively, as he always did, against the inevitable, often startled stares that his appearance in public invariably caused. Though none could have told how he differed from others, people gazed at him half-awedly, then hurried on, instinct whispering to them of strange qualities about the strongly knit, somehow godlike figure of John Smith. People don't like to experience unfamiliar emotions. . .

"There's a man crossing the traffic way on foot," ejaculated Leona suddenly. "He seems in an awful hurry. He is heading this way, as if to intercept us."

The young astronomer flashed his steel-flecked eyes in the indicated direction. On those sensitive retinas there registered a figure of a lone pedestrian hurrying across the brightly lighted boulevard. His manner was urgent, his gaze on Smith with an odd intensity.

The girl cried out. Smith tensed. A huge robot-bus was bearing down silently but swiftly on the intent "jaywalker." Oblivious to the fifteen tons of rushing, silent death, the man came on, his strangely rigid face without expression.

John Smith shouted, gesticulated, but even as he did so he knew the robot-bus was too close. And the witless robot at the controls failed to react to this unusual violation of the traffic-way by a walker. Leona thought she could hear the dull thud.

Passengers screamed, people on the walk-way shouted. The bus swept on, and a groan rose from the crowd —a sound that changed to amazed ejaculations. For the man stood there, unharmed! The bus had narrowly missed him. People's eyes had played them false. The suddenly gathered crowd quickly dispersed.

But they had not seen what had registered on the acute retinas of John Smith, focused there through eyes that had changed subtly in color. In that fractional instant as the robot-bus approached, a drama had been played out for his eyes alone. The walker had suddenly become aware of the bus, only feet from him. He had—vanished.

RATHER, his outlines had abruptly become vague, insubstantial, invisible to all but Smith. And the rushing bus had passed right through him. Then again he was solid, unharmed. All had happened so swiftly that no eyes but those of Smith could have followed the amazing sequence.

Now the man was again hurrying toward the young couple. They stood waiting, Smith's face strangely grim. Super-keen eyes probing, he sized up the man. Deliberately he avoided looking directly at the strange blur that hovered near the approaching stranger. He was about Smith's build, could have been Smith's age—29. The young scientist was struck by the colorless appearance of the man. His eyes, wide on Smith, were shadowed by overhanging brows over a pasty, unnatural-looking face. Smith struggled for a word to describe the man's expression. Impersonal—that was it! Yet, he radiated a strange force.

He halted before the waiting couple. "I must apologize for creating this—excitement," he stammered. His voice was monotonous, his eyes refused to meet Smith's steel-flecked ones. "I have just heard your broad-

cast about a strange object—a spaceship—approaching Earth! My name is . . . Om; yes, Om. I beg of you to permit me to view it through the big telescope." There was a suppressed urgency in his voice.

"But the object is still too faint for ordinary—" Leone began, then broke off at a warning glance from her husband.

"I realize the Observatory is closed to the public," the man went on, "but I must see this approaching object." His eyes still refused to meet Smith's. Agitation was evident in his manner. Smith found it difficult to refrain from looking at that blur to one side of "Om." He nodded shortly, turned and silently led the way into the entrance of the towering Observatory structure.

In the automatic elevator, he carefully placed himself between the stranger and Leona. He jabbed the button, staring straight ahead. He could watch the man and his accompanying blur from the corner of his eyes. . .

In the Observatory, Smith adjusted the telescope to bring the object again into view, then nodded to Om, who sprang avidly to the eyepiece. Smith stood back, his face set, grim. He didn't intend to lose sight of that blur. . .

Om peered for a long moment into the eyepiece. Then he rose, suppressed excitement in his every gesture. "It is merely a nebulous wisp of matter, not a spaceship!" Om's voice was persuasive.

"It is a spaceship," retorted Smith coolly. "I have calculated its likely point of approach to earth. I shall be on hand when it arrives."

"Oh, no." The stranger dropped his persuasive manner. "You must not meet it. I warn you. Do not be present when it arrives. *Stay what you are!*"

"But that's absurd," Smith broke in sharply. "Of course I shall attempt to contact the occupants of the ship. This is a tremendous event!" Smith ignored that curious ending remark of the creature. It seemed utterly meaningless.

"Then—then I shall have to stop you with my own methods," the man stammered, his voice apologetic. His shaded eyes seemed desperately trying to avoid the direct gaze of Smith's penetrating ones. They wavered, fastened to Smith's, hung there. Sudden fright seemed to wrinkle the rigid features. Om staggered back, still staring into Smith's slitted eyes. He was straining under a terrific mental effort.

Then—Smith reeled. Something seemed to pass from Om's mind into his own. He was almost on the verge of a staggering knowledge. Then it was blacked out. Simultaneously the visitor made a last contortive effort, his eyes rolled—and he vanished!

But not entirely to Smith's keen sight. Where before there had been one blur, now there were two, moving swiftly toward the door.

THE girl cried out, sprang to Smith's side. What had happened? He shook his head dazedly. That sudden perception as though the other man had unwillingly let down his telepathic guard! John Smith had seemed to glimpse into a strange vista that was now only a ghost of a memory.

With an oath he whirled. "Shut that door," he barked to Carter, who was standing a few yards off, jaws agape. "There's Something in here that mustn't get out!" But even as he spoke there was a blur of motion at the open entrance. Smith dashed into the hall. The door of the automatic elevator slammed shut in his face. On ground level, a puzzled watchman stared as the elevator door slid open and Nothing emerged. . .

Leona was at the eyepiece of the telescope when Smith reentered the Observatory. She looked up. "I still can't see the spaceship," she murmured. "That creature, Om, must have eyesight as keen as yours, John!"

"Hardly remarkable, in view of his other powers," snapped Smith. "I've never been able to vanish." Briefly he told the girl about the strange vanishment and reappearance of Om on the traffic-way. "There were two of them," he went on. "One visible,

the other a blur. In the Observatory, the visible one became a blur, too, and both blurs escaped down the elevator."

The next evening the spaceship, an elongated teardrop, was closer, almost visible against the backdrop of space. Its surface, Smith decided, had been treated optically so as to render it invisible to normal human vision, and telescopes. Probably by some technique of light interference, absorbing instead of reflecting incident light rays. Definitely, it was heading for Earth, should land the next afternoon at this rate of approach.

"Why did this creature, Om, try to argue you out of meeting the ship," Leona wondered.

Smith's handsome face was darkly grim. "Probably because the occupants are other creatures like him," he said. "It could be that Om is an advance agent of some alien race, and the spaceship occupants are others. It seems logical."

"But couldn't the space ship easily avoid discovery?" asked the girl. "Why should Om be concerned that you would be able to find its landing place?"

Smith nodded. "That is peculiar. Perhaps its path cannot be changed, and it is headed for this city. If so, I can use Bill Johnson's landing drome, send out a tractor ray and bring it in. I'll see Bill in the morning."

"I'm coming, too," said Leona, and Smith knew she meant it. In intercepting the strange ship, Smith knew he could not count on assistance from other scientists. Despite his prestige, many astronomers had expressed skepticism concerning the "spaceship" Smith had announced in his broadcast. None could see it, no images could be captured on photographic plates. It had not been intended that earth scientists should discover the ship, Smith felt sure. . .

He reached over for the insistently buzzing telephone. It was the watchman at ground-level. "Professor Smith," the fellow blurted, "there's an old fellow down here who demands to see you. Says he's a physician. Wants to see you about a visitor you had yesterday evening. He acts like a wildman, refuses to leave. Shall I call police—"

"Send him up," snapped Smith. Brows lifted, he turned to Leona. "A physician—and he's learned somehow about our strange visitor. Sounds strangely significant. . ."

A moment later Carter was admitting an aged, professional-appearing man. His watery eyes were distended, wavering. They rested on Smith and he staggered over, grasped the youthful Director's arm. "He's showing himself at last!" he cried hoarsely.

"Who is?" demanded Smith — though he had a creeping suspicion.

THE old man waved a newspaper clipping before Smith's nose. It was headed: "Mysterious Doings in Bosworth Observatory." Smith read the small print: "Discovery of ghostly spaceships is not the only accomplishment at the Bosworth Observatory. It has been visited by a ghost in person! It seems that Prof. Smith, the Director, admitted a visitor last night to look at the 'ghost ship', and the visitor himself turned out to be a ghost. The visitor suddenly vanished from sight, according to the watchman, who got it from Dr. Carter, who actually saw it happen. The ghost used the elevator to ride down in, according to the watchman. . ."

Smith crumbled the clipping, his eyes glinting. He looked around for the indiscreet assistant.

The old man put a restraining hand on his arm. "I want to know only one thing. Is that the truth? Did the visitor actually vanish in this observatory? I ask not from idle curiosity, but from fear—deadly fear!"

Smith nodded. "A person calling himself 'Om' was here," he said dryly. "Yes, he vanished!"

The old physician groaned. "I feared so," he muttered. "My name is Hoagland. I am the physician who, 29 years ago, presided at the birth of Cunningham—'Om's' real name is Cunningham!"

Leona and John Smith exchanged glances.

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"His parents were—ordinary humans," whispered the girl.

Hoagland nodded absently, his eyes wide and staring as if at some inner vision. "For nearly 25 years I have lived under a pall of fear," he went on tonelessly. "Cringing at every unexplained occurrence. Always I wondered if Cunningham—or Om—was at last showing his hand."

He settled reluctantly into the chair Smith indicated, looked from one to the other of the young couple, his irises black and expanded. "I heard your broadcast about a spaceship approaching," he said. "Then when I read that newspaper clipping I put two and two together. I realized your visitor must be he whom I delivered into the world 29 years ago. I witnessed the creature's power to vanish, in its childhood. For 25 years he has remained out of sight. Now—your broadcast about an approaching spaceship brings him into the news. Why?"

"Let us get this straight, Doctor," broke in Smith curtly. "Are you telling us that this creature we know as Om was delivered into the world by you from a human mother? Why has the world not heard? Surely the birth of a human being with these strange powers was an event of transcendent importance!"

Hoagland nodded numbly, his eyes darting toward the shadows in the Observatory. His seamed face worked. "It was all my fault. I was an ambitious young doctor, jealous of my discovery. I wished to astound the world by the announcement after I had collected indisputable data. I failed to report the real facts to the Medical Board. The mother passed on a short time after the birth, and the father followed a few months later. I secured legal guardianship. When I had decided finally to reveal my findings it was too late. I would not have been credited in the absence of the evidence. Guiltily, I held my peace. You see, the quadruplets vanished from my home when they were a few months over four years—"

"Quadruplets!" shot out Smith. "You mean Om is one of four—"

"Not one of four—*four of one!*"

hissed the old man fiercely. "One ego, one identity, inhabiting and controlling four physical selves."

He relaxed, in the stunned silence that followed. "Excuse me," he went on, "for not having spoken plainer. The fact is that Nature, at last, has produced — Superman! Indeed, the evidence that nature was working toward this type of human has been before us right along. It was appropriate that Cunningham, a brilliant scientific genius, and his beautiful, aesthetic wife, should have been the first to produce the new type—"

"To what 'evidence' do you refer?" broke in Smith.

"What are identical twins?" shot back Hoagland. "What are triplets, quadruplets, even quintuplets? They are attempts by nature to produce a multiple being. The close *rapport* existing between identical twins, triplets and the rest is a known fact. But only in the Cunningham quadruplets—in Om—has nature at last fully succeeded. Succeeded in creating a human that is one self, one ego, controlling four separate physical attributes or bodies!"

"But how would that give him these strange powers," gasped Leona.

SILENTLY, Smith passed Hoagland a drink of brandy.

"This is the way I have reasoned it out," went on the physician. "Man, as a single being, has reached the limit of his mental powers. Basic human intelligence has not increased for many hundreds of years. Man's intelligence has been limited by the fact that he has only one mind, one center of conscious thought. The interaction of the brain neurons is all sifted through this one, sharply limited conscious mind.

"Om, in his four physical selves, has four conscious minds, four sparks of awareness, all bounden to the one central ego, all pouring the result of mental activity into the lap of this ego, for coordination. This plurality of conscious minds gives a mental perspective, just as two eyes give visual perspective. Visual perspective gives a perception of distance,

(Continued On Page 104)

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(Continued From Page 103)

size and shape. Om's four-fold *mental* perspective gives him a perception of time and space and motion—the trinity in which the very universe exists!

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Hoagland stopped suddenly, whirled about as the door slid open.

"Only Carter entering," murmured Smith, his voice slightly edged as he remembered the newspaper clipping.

Leona was leaning forward, lips parted, coal black eyes wide on Dr. Hoagland.

Smith pressed the old man back into his chair. "You lost control of the quadruplets?" he asked.

"Yes. I was continually spying upon them, to get data as to their suspected oneness of identity. Two of them, present in the high-frequency—or invisible—condition, abruptly appeared solidly before me, glaring at me with more than childish wrath, at this invasion of their privacy. It gave me a shock I can tell you. That was the first I knew of their possession of this power."

He paused, continued. "But my climactic error was in permitting them once, to play with normal neighborhood children. Perhaps the quadruplets innocently displayed their strange powers. Perhaps the other children intuitively sensed their difference. Children are merciless toward any deviation from the norm. They drove the Cunningham children off with sticks and stones. The developing, sensitive ego doubtless realized then the impossibility of ever being accepted by human society. Doubtless they read this in the minds of the other children, in the minds of myself and my wife, in the composite thoughts reaching them from all sides.

"And it is unlikely that the ego, in maturity, has seen anything of human nature to cause it to revise its opinion of its likely treatment,

should its real nature, its superiority to the race, become known."

"They ran away?" asked Leona, her voice sympathetic.

Hoagland nodded. "Almost immediately after their experience with the normal children—they were then four years of age. Vanished without a trace. Nor did I report it, for fear of complications. Not that it is likely the police could have located them. Somehow, they have kept hidden all these years, reaching maturity's full powers. And now, Om shows up to interest himself in a spaceship from the void!" He shuddered.

Smith was silent, thinking. The old man suffered from conscience, yet Smith could not entirely discount his fears. How was Om connected with the approaching spaceship, and why did he warn Smith against being present when it arrived?

He related the episode of the robot-van, of the manner in which the van had apparently passed through the man.

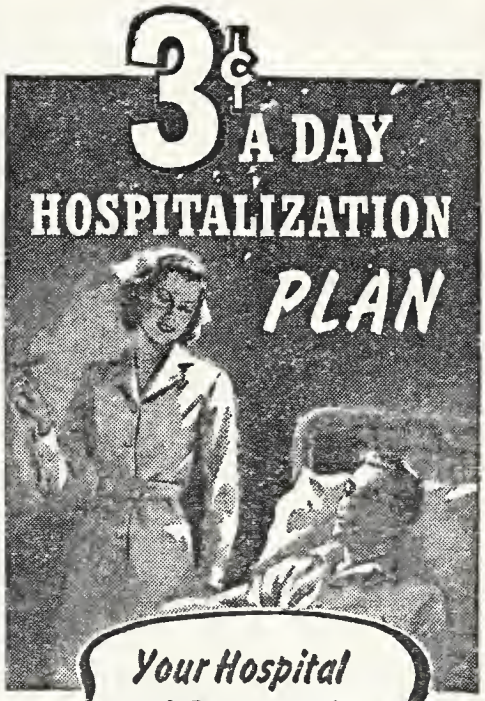
"He saw the oncoming bus in time," Hoagland hazarded, "and passed instantly into his high-frequency condition. Solid matter could pass through him in that state!"

"It jibes with my observations," agreed Smith absently. "The visible self was accompanied by one of the other selves, in the blurred, high-frequency state. That accounts for two of the four. Where are the other two physical selves?"

"THEY can doubtless travel about independently of one another," said Hoagland, "retaining their telepathic rapport each with the others—" He paused suddenly, sat up with a jerk. Sudden suspicion appeared in his watery eyes. "How is it?" he said thickly, "that they were visible to you in their high-frequency condition?"

Smith shrugged wearily. "My eyes are somewhat more acute than the average, due, I suppose," he finished lamely, "to constant use of the telescope." He hadn't intended mentioning that he could see the Om bodies in their "invisible" state!

(Continued On Page 106)



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(Continued From Page 105)

"I—I see," murmured Hoagland. For the first time he seemed to really see John Smith. He stared into the young astronomer's steel-flecked gray eyes, and his own wavered. A puzzled expression crossed his face, that same expression which Smith had seen on so many other faces of people seeing him for the first time. Smith stirred uncomfortably, glanced at Leona, was surprised to see her eyelids drooping over her dark eyes, as if in an attempt to hide within herself some half-formed thought. A faint, indefinable movement pulled his eyes over to the dimly lit telescope platform.

He shot to his feet. Over the eyepiece there hovered a vague blur in the outline of a man. The blur vanished from the eyepiece, as Smith leaped toward it, swept over to where the girl was sitting meditatively. The blur hovered over her. She rose abruptly, screaming.

Smith leaped toward her. She was becoming vague, shadowy. With a hoarse cry, John Smith landed by her vanishing form, sought to grasp it. Then it was being swept away from him. Two blurred streaks of motion swept toward the Observatory door.

"It's locked," shouted Smith, rushing toward the door. "They can't get out!"

The blurs hesitated a moment at the door, as if encountering an initial surface tension. Then they melted through, out of sight.

Smith hurled himself at the door, jabbed the hidden sliding mechanism. As the door slid aside he rushed into the corridor. The blurs were vanishing into the automatic elevator, the door clanged shut as Smith smashed up against it.

"What was it?" gasped Hoagland. He and Carter had come up behind Smith. "Was it . . . Om?"

"It was!" gritted Smith, jabbing uselessly at the elevator call button.

Hoagland shook his head. "Pursuit is useless. Where would we pursue to? In this state of accelerated frequency they are utterly beyond our reach."

Smith dashed back into the ob-

servatory, buzzed the watchman. He hung up in a moment, his face ashen and grim. The others had followed him in. "The fellow could hardly talk," muttered Smith. "Says that 'ghost' came out of the elevator again."

"But why did he take your wife?" quavered Hoagland.

"As a warning to me." Smith's voice hit low octaves. "He must have entered the Observatory when Carter came in, for a final check up on the approaching spaceship. I had the telescope following it automatically, since it is still maintaining the same orbit. Om must have read in my mind that I intended to ignore his warning, and meet the ship. But why," he asked the air, "didn't he take me instead of Leona?"

Hoagland's restless old eyes fastened on Smith's steel-flecked ones. "Perhaps," he said huskily, "in some strange way, you are beyond his power. . ."

Next day a sober, silent John Smith went ahead with plans to intercept the strange ship. It was against his nature to cringe before a blow. He knew his wife would have been disappointed in him had he quailed before the fact of her abduction.

STRANGELY, the ship still followed the same path, as though automatically guided, and would land somewhere in this city this afternoon. Doubtless it would be beamed in by some private landing base controlled by Om. Well, he would see about that. . .

The ship was still invisible, apparently, to normal eyesight, due to some technique of surfacing that interfered with reflection of light. Smith ignored the jibe that appeared in the morning paper, titled, "Where is that ghost-ship now, Professor?" It was just as well that astronomers had failed to recognize its existence.

By early afternoon, Smith was waiting alone on a stratocraft landing base atop a tall building some distance from the Observatory. His friend Johnson, who operated the

(Continued On Page 108)

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(Continued From Page 107)

base, had perceived Smith's preoccupation, and tactfully left him alone, asking no questions.

Smith worked the apparatus, sent up the tractor beam used to bring in strato-craft. Somewhere in the city, he was sure, another beam was reaching up for this same ship. He hoped it wasn't as powerful as this beam, the most powerful in the city, supposedly.

Smith had almost thought he had failed, when he saw it—a wavering, half-visible tear-drop shape, sliding down the beam with decreasing velocity. Apparently, its occupant was expecting to be beamed in; at any rate, its mechanism was automatically shut off by the tractor beam. It slowed, landed. It was about three times larger than an ordinary two-seater flier, and quite solid, though its surfacing made it all but invisible from any distance.

Smith waited tensely. What would come out of the ship? Some alien being — an other worldly creature with whom the plural man was conspiring against a humanity that had ill used him? Was that why Om had warned Smith against being present?

He started back as the circular door whirled about, screwing out, then swinging open on hinges. The interior was lighted.

Smith waited for a long moment, watching, then as nothing emerged, he stepped inside, breathlessly.

Inside was absolute silence. Smith looked around at the strange-looking dials and controls lining the interior. His eyes stopped at a figure lying on a couch at one end, held there by straps. Slowly Smith moved closer, stared down at the face of the occupant.

Smith's eyes changed color from purple to ultra-red, then became normal again. He staggered back, his keen intellect completely at a loss for once.

The figure lying on the cot was—himself! The features were those of Smith, every line and angle. The steel-flecked eyes were open in death. Apparently the man had known he was dying, and had strapped himself

onto the cot, and set the automatic controls for earth. The man, Smith knew instinctively, was not just a close double of his; there was something closer!

"I would have spared you this!" said a voice.

Smith whirled around. He reeled back again. For he, himself, stood there in double—two of him, gazing sorrowfully back at him as from mirrors. They must have just entered from outside the ship.

"What—how—who are—" Smith gave it up, looked with thunderstruck eyes at the figure on the cot, then back at the two living replicas of himself.

One spoke again. "We are Cunningham—or Om. You are one of us. It was I who first visited your Observatory—disguised!" The speaker pointed to the figure on the cot. "He perished in space and is now lost to the indivisible ego that is us and you. The Self now activates only three body-attributes—we, and you—the one kept separate!"

Smith struggled to right his stunned perceptions. "I am one of you?" he stammered.

"You *are* us," was the reply. "And we are you. Our ego is one and indivisible. At the age of four, you were isolated, dissociated, from the other three physical attributes of our joint ego. We early realized the sorrow that was in store for us within human society, due to our difference from the rest of humanity. We therefore caused one physical self—you—to live as a single being, your ego the same as ours, but memory associations isolated within your one mind, your rapport with the other three physical attributes blocked off, your mind and personality split off from the central ego, and yet stemming from that ego!"

THINGS were clicking into place in Smith's adaptable mind. Much was suddenly clear.

"My wife—Leona," he burst out.

"Here!" said a soft voice, and an arm circled his. Leona had been standing behind him. "After hear-

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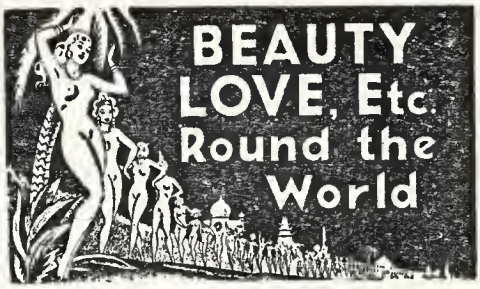

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(Continued From Page 109)

ing Dr. Hoagland's story," she went on, "I began to suspect the truth about your strange powers. The Om self who was then invisibly present in the Observatory, read my mind, took me away to prevent me telling you I suspected you were one of the quadruplets. For had I told you this, you would have sought them out, to learn the truth. The life you had built up as a single, normal individual would have crashed down! Of course I was to be released as soon as I had been warned of the consequences of telling you."

John Smith took a moment to release the pent-up emotions of reunion with the girl he had thought lost.

"And that was why 'Om' acted so strangely in my presence," he asked them all, marveling.

Leona nodded, as the two Om selves waited smilingly. "He was wearing a plastic mask at that first meeting," she said. "Or you would have recognized yourself in him. Even so, as you and Om faced one another in the Observatory the urge of your joint ego to unite, to coalesce, was overwhelmingly strong. Your minds flowed together for an instant. To avoid complete reunion of the selves then and there, Om vanished by passing into his higher frequency condition. You see, it is the plurality, the merging of more than one mind, that gives this power, as Dr Hoagland suggested—"

"Like this!" broke on one of the selves. At once, in a sudden overwhelming surge, Smith experienced an amazing expansion of consciousness. Vast knowledge and powers were his. He *understood* space and time and motion and matter. Why, it would be simple to accelerate the vibratory rate of his electrons, pass into the high frequency state of matter! And he was plural. From three form attributes the unified ego now looked out with an extraordinary three-fold perspective that saw the esences of form and matter, time and space, instead of their secondary effects. Leona looked particularly marvelous, the many aspects of her that

John Smith saw, melting into one being of superb beauty!

And memory! The whole panorama of his multiple life spread before him. Not only the memories he had acquired in his John Smith self, but also those of the other selves. How, after leaving the Doctor's home, their sensitive ego brooding with hurt, one self was purposely separated, dissociated, "blocked off" from the rest, to live as a normal human being, a single physical entity. Left at an orphanage step, with knowledge only that his name was 'John Smith'. How the others had avoided the ken of ordinary human society, nameless, within society but not of it, until safely attaining full maturity and power.

How the mature selves, in tentative excursions into society, had aroused instinctive antagonism, even panic, and had finally given it up. For even the Smith self, sacrificing the powers in plurality, successfully dissociated from the others, aroused vague instinctive reactions in people! For as one of the quadruplets, he retained their organic superiority.

And suddenly he was John Smith again, looking at the other two from the mind and body of John Smith.

"The reunion lasted but a few seconds," one of the other selves said. "It was the quickest way to acquaint you with the truth, without long explanations. But we must part quickly, else the merging into one will become permanent. The dissociation of one self has been successful and must continue. Permanent coalescence would cause subtle changes in you. People would cringe from you, distrust you instinctively as they do us!"

"But this spaceship, and the dead self," Smith asked. He had not had time to review these later events and the memory of them was now withdrawn. "What does it mean?"

"When we learned of the impossibility of living among humans we experimented with space flight," said one. "This ship is our first creation. Only one physical attribute went on this first journey, we following him

(Continued On Page 112)

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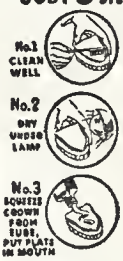

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(Continued From Page 111)

mentally, through our common rapport. Perhaps on another planet is a society where it is not a crime to be —different! But this attempt failed. The inimical rays of space caused the ego to withdraw from this body on the cot. First, however, knowing of impending death, the stricken self set the ship for earth. Our rapport was cut off at the death of this attribute. When we heard you broadcast your discovery of a spaceship, we naturally came to the Observatory to see if it was our ship. Upon seeing it was, it became our main purpose to prevent you from meeting the ship, learning the truth! But let us emerge from this dismal ship."

OUTSIDE was the small rocket ship by which the two Cunningham—or Om—selves and Leona had arrived, when they saw the spaceship was being diverted to this landing base.

"You and your wife will take this flier and return to your home," said one.

"But you—"

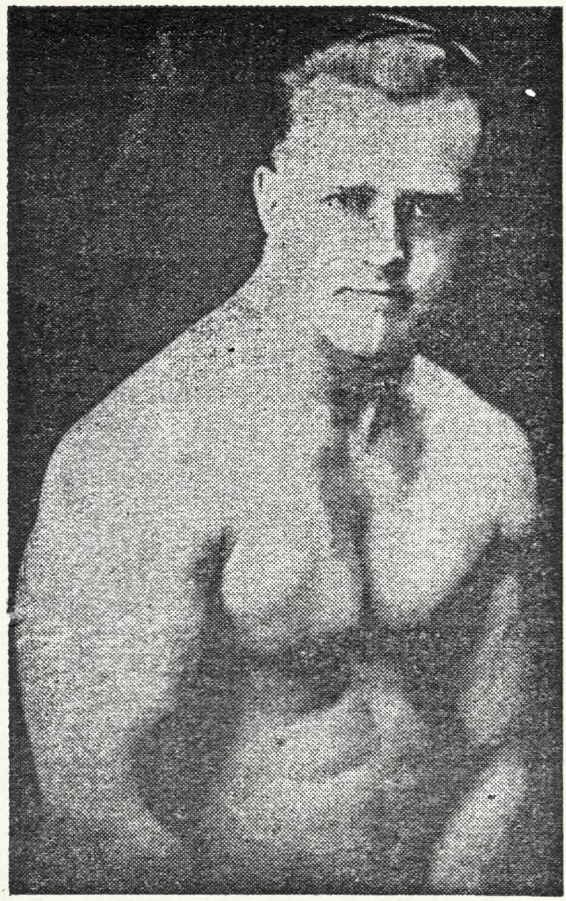
"After devising protective measures, we shall go forth into space, to continue our search for another society," was the reply. "Any more contact between us will imperil your status as a single being. Then you would arouse the same extreme reactions in people that we do. Vast, spacial distances between us will mitigate that peril . . ."

"But I feel a slacker," blurted Smith. "I should go along and help—"

Two heads shook in unison. "You do not accuse your left hand of slacking if your right can do the job better! We are all one ego. We are the forerunners of a more highly evolved humanity. It is we two who are the slackers. It is you who stay behind to prepare the ground for the appearance of others of our kind! For others there will be . . ."

As John Smith and his wife soared homeward in the little rocket, they gazed into one another's eyes, and pondered that last statement.

THE END



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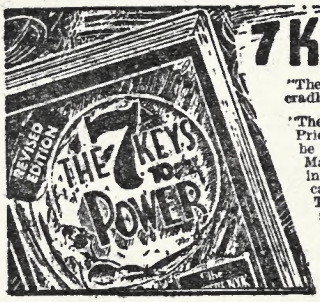

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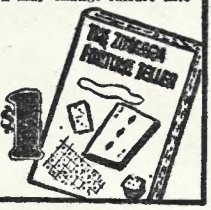

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